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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5994th meeting

Tuesday, 14 October 2008, 10.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Zhang Yesui	(China)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. De Vengoechea
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2008/617)

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08-54872 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2008/617)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and Pakistan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/617, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Eide: When I briefed the Council in July (see S/PV.5930), I spoke about the outcome of the Paris Conference in support of Afghanistan, which was a success in several ways. The Conference provided $21 billion for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and it also gave us a road map for how to proceed together with the Afghan leadership; the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the Paris Declaration. So there was a road map then, and the road map remains.

Since then, we have, I believe, been distracted from the commitments undertaken in Paris. The main reason for that is the deteriorating security situation, as we have seen over the last few months. In July and August, we witnessed the highest number of security incidents since 2002. It was an increase of up to 40 per cent, compared to the same months of July and August last year.

In the report before the Council (S/2008/617), three characteristics of the security situation have been highlighted. First, the influence of the insurgency has spread beyond the traditional areas in the south and the east and has extended to provinces around Kabul. Secondly, there has been an increase in asymmetric attacks, some of them very sophisticated, which has contributed to an increase in civilian casualties. And thirdly, there were more and sometimes deadly attacks against aid-related and humanitarian targets, including deadly attacks against non-governmental organization and United Nations personnel.

During September, the month of Ramadan, we saw a decrease in the number of incidents, as we had expected. On International Peace Day, on 21 September, we saw that hostilities were almost brought to a halt, including by the Taliban, following an appeal by the United Nations. That allowed us to vaccinate 1.6 million children against polio, which was a major achievement.

However, we are now seeing a new increase in the number of incidents, and we must expect that the number of incidents will continue to climb further over the next weeks, with at least four good weather weeks remaining after the end of Ramadan. We should be prepared for a situation where we do not experience the

same winter lull — the same reduction in the level of hostilities — that we have experienced in past winters. So the situation is challenging, and it is indeed complex.

I would nevertheless caution against the kind of gloom and doom statements of which we have heard so many recently: many of them really go too far. Also, some of them come from people who have scarcely put their feet on the ground in Afghanistan. There are positive developments that we must take advantage of, and these positive developments affect some of the critical elements in our common agenda to solve the conflict. Let me mention three of them in particular.

First, the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan has improved. Instead of acrimonious statements, we now see a more constructive working relationship emerging. Following President Karzai's attendance at the swearing-in ceremony of President Zardari, the political dialogue is expanding, and it is based on an understanding that a threat from the insurgency is a shared threat. In addition to this political dialogue, I hope that the jirga process of last year will soon get under way again. It is a useful instrument for helping to address challenges that the two countries have in common. The international community must strengthen this improved relationship in a wise, thoughtful and generous way.

The second development is the changes made by President Karzai in his Government last Saturday. I know from numerous conversations with the President that those changes reflect a desire to better address some of the key areas that have been identified in the ANDS and the Paris Declaration as our common priorities. I am first and foremost thinking of the strengthening of the Ministry of Interior and of the Afghan police, the latter of which lags seriously behind the army. This could affect security on the ground, the respect for rule of law, the fight against corruption and our counter-narcotics and border control efforts. The implications could thus be very significant. I know that the new Minister, who has previously successfully built two ministries, is dedicated to doing his utmost and will approach this task also with great determination.

The changes in the Ministry of Agriculture must also be used to inject new energy into boosting agricultural production and to help us to avoid serious and frequent shortages of food and stimulate economic growth. It is an area that we, the international community, have neglected for too long; and the price of such neglect is too high. Over the last few days, the United Nations has already been working with the Afghan Government and key partners on the ground to determine how we can use this opportunity to address our common priorities.

The third positive development is that the latest statistics for drug production show a mixed picture, but with some important positive trends. The overall production area has been reduced by 19 per cent, and the number of poppy-free provinces has gone from 11 two years ago to 13 last year and to 18 this year. And further can progress can be made here. Today, poppy cultivation is not an Afghanistan-wide phenomenon, but rather a phenomenon limited to a number of provinces, primarily in the south, and particularly, of course, Helmand, which accounts for the vast majority of the production. At this stage, we must do our utmost to consolidate this progress and make sure that, next year, more — and not fewer — provinces are poppy-free. As I have said previously, that is achievable.

If we make good use of these positive trends in critical areas, then the overall impact could also be very significant. I am cautiously — I repeat, cautiously — optimistic that we can start replacing the current negative atmosphere with an atmosphere of greater confidence in what we are all doing. That is important for the Afghan people, and it is important for the public in donor and troop-contributing countries as well as for the international community as such.

There is one other priority that has to be urgently addressed. The humanitarian challenges are serious and increasing. First and foremost, we may soon be facing a serious food shortage. Again, I would urge donors to ensure that the requirements of the joint appeal launched by the Afghan Government and the United Nations in July are covered, so that food and other assistance can be available to those who are the most vulnerable.

Let me draw the Council's attention to another important priority for the United Nations, for the Afghan Government in particular, for the Afghan authorities and for us all. A week ago, the election process started with the first phase of voter registration. Despite delays in the opening of some voter registration centres, due to logistics, communication and security issues, 90 per cent of the registration centres were open this week. Together with

the Afghan authorities, we are monitoring the situation closely to overcome operational challenges and to do our utmost to ensure a safe and credible registration process.

A part of our mandate is to ensure better civil-military cooperation. I believe that, today, we have a better relationship with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) than we had half a year ago. It is a relationship based on respect for each other's distinctive mandates. We have worked together closely on the election process, which is now under way. We work better on humanitarian issues, where a set of guidelines have been agreed upon to ensure that humanitarian assistance is delivered in an impartial way, respecting humanitarian principles. We work together on human rights issues, not least to avoid civilian casualties as a result of the use of force. It is my hope and belief that the current work in this area will have a positive impact on the ground, and I am convinced that a clear and independent United Nations voice in this area is of benefit to all, and that a good and constant dialogue with the military forces is essential. My recent and very constructive conversations with key military leaders confirm that impression.

However, when we talk about civilian casualties, I should add something fundamental here. When we speak about this topic, we must all remember that the clear majority of such casualties are caused by the insurgency. The increased use of asymmetric attacks has also led to a significant increase in civilian victims, and such attacks must be firmly condemned.

As part of our civilian-military cooperation, we have also elaborated an integrated approach under civilian leadership. The challenge will be to translate this strategy into practical policies. And in this respect I would like to make one comment that I consider to be of great importance. To me, a comprehensive approach is not first and foremost a question of how to organize our efforts in a post-operational landscape; it is about how we allocate our overall civilian and military resources to produce optimal effects on the ground. Today, a growing amount of civilian resources is allocated to conflict provinces to support military operations. I understand that, and I understand the logic that countries need to demonstrate that where they fight they must also build. But the result could easily be that more and more of us adopt a province-based perspective. We must avoid a donor-generated fragmentation of Afghanistan. There must be a balance. That is my appeal.

Civilian resources will inevitably have a limited impact where and when the conflict is most intense. At the same time, a number of provinces and districts are in the balance. A number of provinces have seen progress that must be urgently consolidated. But they receive very modest resources. And these are provinces that could be stabilized and where progress could be consolidated with limited means and limited civilian economic resources. But the effect would be tremendous. That view is shared by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Costa. And let me add that, without a balanced and equitable distribution of resources, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, to which we have all committed ourselves, cannot be implemented.

There is today much talk about reconciliation. I have always believed that a solution to the conflict in Afghanistan will depend on the continued and robust presence of military forces but that the solution in itself will ultimately be a political solution. However, we must avoid speaking of reconciliation in a way that does not reflect the complexity of such a process and does not fully respect the lead and the ownership of the Afghan Government. A policy of engagement will be required. It must be led with strength and confidence by the Afghan Government, based on the constitution and the other achievements we have made so far, and it must be supported by a strong and confident international community. The United Nations stands ready to assist in such a process, in accordance with the mandate given to us in Security Council resolution 1806 (2008).

Finally, I have a few words about the work of the United Nations Mission. It is still a small mission in need of qualified staff to fulfil its mandate. We have asked for a significant increase in staff and in budget, and I appeal to all Council members for their support. However, I am more concerned about the quality than the quantity of the staff. At the present stage, we need a number of people with very specialized qualifications within aid effectiveness, agriculture, et cetera. I am grateful for the many offers that made been made, but I also ask for understanding for the fact that the regulations we have to respect in this building make it difficult to respond as positively and as quickly as we would have liked. There is a need for all of us to find

creative solutions within existing regulations that enable us to meet specific requirements quickly.

With regard to the substance of our work after Paris, we have set up a new and more results-oriented consultation machinery, and it is starting to work. We have worked with the Afghan Government to establish an implementation structure for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. We have worked with international donors to obtain the clarity we have sought in the important social outreach programme of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, where discussion has gone on for many months and delayed important efforts. We have worked with the Afghan Government to strengthen institution-building and to move toward a more professional civil service.

Over the past few days, as I mentioned, our efforts have been concentrated on the need to build support around the new ministers who are about to take up their functions. We are addressing critical issues of data collection in order to monitor and improve aid effectiveness.

Some have asked where I would like the United Nations Mission to be six months from now. So let me mention some achievable targets: to agree with donors on specific criteria to measure aid effectiveness, such as the amount of money spent through the core budget; appropriate mechanisms to provide orchestrated support to the Afghan National Development Strategy; the equitable nationwide distribution of resources; the percentage of resources spent in Afghanistan in opposition to resources being spent in donor countries; and the level of resources spent to build Afghan capacity. None of these are new; they are all Paris commitments that we have all undertaken.

Second, we must establish one databank instead of many, allowing the Afghan Government and the United Nations to track resources spent through provincial reconstruction teams, development agencies and non-governmental agencies. That is critical for transparency and aid effectiveness. Today, the United Nations and, even more important, the Afghan Government do not know how many resources are going into the country or what they are being spent on. That must be corrected.

Third, we must set up a mechanism for joint audits, enhancing accountability on each side.

Fourth, we must strengthen the recently established Government mechanism for combating corruption.

Fifth, we must agree on a plan as to the kind of police we want — because we are not even there yet — how we should train them and how we should equip them, and then we must start implementing that plan.

Sixth, as I have stated, we must put discussion behind us with regard to the Afghan social outreach programme and start implementing it.

Seventh, we must develop a design for agricultural reform that enables all of us to follow the same priorities and to maximize the impact of the resources available to us.

Eighth, we must solidify the Pakistani-Afghan relationship within a wider regional confidence-building framework.

I have often talked about a political surge. By that, I do not mean to minimize the importance of military forces, but it is important to focus on how to give the political dimension of our work greater prominence. The issues that I have mentioned belong to the political agenda, where we have to seek a surge.

I hope that we can all work together on that agenda. We will do our best to coordinate, but coordination does not depend on mechanisms; it depends on commitments and the implementation of commitments. That is the main challenge: to take commitments seriously. We will do our work, and I trust that we will have the Council's full cooperation.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Eide for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. We wish you every success. I would also like to express our appreciation for the convening of today's important debate and to welcome the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2008/617). In addition, we are grateful to Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his insightful briefing.

Seven years ago this month, an unprecedented war was launched — a war that was not against a country or a State, but against the amorphous scourge of terrorism that was threatening to undermine security in all parts of the world. That war was unavoidable, inevitable and absolutely necessary. Now, in 2008, despite hard work on the part of international coalition forces and Afghans alike, terrorism appears to be on the rise again. The Taliban burn down schools, stamp out reconstruction and butcher civilians. They attack roads and regions around Kabul, hampering international humanitarian relief efforts. Ordinary people are increasingly their targets. Their belligerence against true progress and security in Afghanistan is continuous, boundless and cruel.

To push back against that scourge, we must first understand the changes that have occurred with regard to its sources and the strategy of the threat since 2001.

First, the Government of Afghanistan recognizes that the Taliban is a heterogeneous group and that some of its members may be willing to participate in the peace process. Our Government will keep the door open to such members.

Secondly, the Government of Afghanistan acknowledges the evolving strategy of the Taliban and Al-Qaida. While the world's attention was focused within the borders of Afghanistan, the Taliban and Al-Qaida intensified their operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Area border regions of Pakistan. They now hope to use the timing of the elections in the United States and Afghanistan to force a change in the international commitment in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, the Taliban are fighting a war of perception. They seek to instil uncertainty about prospects for peace in Afghanistan by launching attacks of a spectacular nature — attacks that the news media can easily capture and broadcast.

We must also recognize that security is not confined to military security. Real security is established through improvement in the day-to-day lives of Afghans, measured by improvement in humanitarian efforts, governance and the rule of law, counter-narcotics efforts, the upcoming elections, strong army and police forces, and a strong and sustainable economy.

First, the humanitarian situation regarding the food shortage in Afghanistan needs immediate attention on the part of the international community, especially as winter approaches. The crisis has been the first topic discussed and pursued in every Afghanistan Cabinet meeting this year. Our Government hopes that the world will heed the call of the United Nations for increased international relief efforts.

Secondly, three days ago, our Government took a crucial step towards improving governance and eliminating corruption. President Karzai announced a reshuffling of the Cabinet, including the appointment of a new Interior Minister. That key move accompanied the creation of a High Office of Oversight to combat corruption and of special anti-corruption police and prosecutors. We are also strengthening local governance through new appointments, the training of local administrators and new incentives for accountability.

Thirdly, counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan are seeing the beginning of a breakthrough. More than half of the provinces are poppy-free. The few remaining centres of poppy cultivation are in the insecure areas of Afghanistan, where international and Government efforts have been unable to put down real roots. The Government of Afghanistan applauds the recent decision of forces led by NATO and the International Security Assistance Force to target opium factories for the first time.

Fourthly, our Government understands the tremendous importance of secure, transparent, timely and credible presidential elections in the summer of 2009. There is no alternative to elections in ensuring the legitimacy of the process in Afghanistan. To that end, we have drafted legislation on the Independent Election Commission, and we held our first day of registration last week. However, our Government also cautions that the elections require a process of sustained long-term efforts and hopes to ensure that the political process acts as a unifying, rather than as a divisive force for Afghanistan.

Fifthly, the Afghan National Army has made significant improvements in command and control, and plans are in place to increase its numbers from 75,000 to 134,000 by 2010. The Afghan National Police has also increased its activity and is the focus of rank and pay reform.

Sixthly, the Government of Afghanistan is strongly dedicated to improving the economic livelihood of every Afghan. We are building roads,

schools and clinics in more than two thirds of our villages through the National Solidarity Programme. As a testament to our efforts, gross domestic product has tripled since 2001. In short, the Government of Afghanistan is making progress on many fronts. However, our goals are so ambitious as to need strong and sustained international support to be fully realized.

The way forward in Afghanistan is to recognize that abandonment and failure are not options. We must stop engaging in the wrong debate of whether or not we will fail. We must instead focus on the right debate, on how we can succeed. That debate acknowledges the absolute necessity of the following four items: a regional solution; sustained international commitment; appropriate strategies in this war of perceptions; and, lastly, a consideration of all components important to a successful political solution to Afghanistan's challenges.

First, it is now clear that the Taliban is a regional threat. Its base of operations is no longer in Afghanistan, but in the border regions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. We have found in the new President of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, a friend and trusted leader with whom to address terrorism. Our Foreign Minister, Mr. Rangin Dâdfar Spantâ, will visit Pakistan on 22 October to further that collaboration and discuss long-term strategic relations between the two countries. However, the international community also has the responsibility to maintain the momentum between the elected Government of Pakistan and Afghanistan by boosting joint efforts to eradicate the threat of the Taliban and Al-Qaida.

Regarding the second aspect of the way forward, the Government of Afghanistan applauds the international community for its reinvigorated attention to Afghanistan. We commend Kai Eide's leadership in coordinating the efforts of the international community. Only six months into his term, we are seeing very positive results from the stronger collaboration between our Government and the United Nations. In addition, the Bucharest summit and the Paris Conference produced a strong consensus that the international community will stay engaged in Afghanistan as long as necessary, verifying international aid pledges that totalled more than $20 billion. In the seven years since international forces first entered Afghanistan, international attention has often flagged, but the new relationship with the United Nations, the Bucharest consensus and the Paris momentum are all indications that international attention is refocused. Let us sustain that attention and not lose focus again.

The third important aspect of the way forward is a full consideration of how to wage a smarter war of perception. Three things need to be done.

First, we should be careful with what we say about Afghanistan. Media outlets move with astonishing speed in Afghanistan and word of mouth carries any pessimistic news quickly to the Afghan people. The Taliban have used some recent statements and reports as a powerful weapon to convince the Afghan people that the international community's resolve is wavering. That is undeniably harmful to our operations and efforts in Afghanistan.

Secondly, we must not underestimate our successes. The gross domestic product of Afghanistan has tripled since 2001. In two thirds of Afghanistan, there is no conflict and millions of Afghans work and live their lives peacefully. The international community must not underreport the many success stories in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, our assessments and reports must be stronger in reflecting the destructiveness and brutality of the Taliban. We build a school in six months; they burn it down in six minutes. The Taliban are, in fact, responsible for the majority of civilian casualties in Afghanistan this year.

The fourth and final aspect of the way forward is in regards to the Secretary-General's political surge in Afghanistan. Such a political surge must consider the following components to be successful.

First, reconciliation efforts must be better framed both inside and outside of Afghanistan. Currently, those reconciliation efforts are portrayed as an alternative to the efforts of the past seven years. In fact, reconciliation is but another tool in our arsenal to ensure continued progress towards a stable Afghanistan. From the members of the Ulema to tribal leaders, strong forces desire peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Thus, important steps have been taken in recent months to begin the reconciliation process.

Secondly, a political surge includes not only reconciliation with interested parties, but also a strengthening of relationships with Afghan communities themselves. Such outreach by the Government of Afghanistan will be extended to

communities under Taliban influence and in secure, peaceful regions.

Thirdly, a political surge cannot afford to neglect the importance of military action. Afghanistan must be able to negotiate from a position of strength, which depends on the strong backing of international troops and the Afghan National Army. An increase in international troops is an essential and necessary first step to counter terrorist activities. However, those troops must also be willing to face enemies and conduct operations thoroughly. They should address responsibly the issue of civilian casualties that is a challenge to our goal of winning the Afghan people's hearts and minds.

We face at this time a critical opportunity to turn the tide against the forces of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan will devote itself fully and completely to the quest for security and peace. In turn, we hope that this Council will continue to generate the right debate — a debate that acknowledges the importance of a regional solution and of sustained international commitment; a debate that assembles, with urgency, appropriate strategies to fight effectively in this war of perceptions; and a debate that considers all of the components important to a successful political surge.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): I wish to warmly thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Kai Eide, for his frank, complete and thoughtful briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and his appeal, especially, to keep a realistic optimism and determination in our efforts. I agree with the points made to that effect by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Zahir Tanin.

I would like to reaffirm once again our full support for the leading role of the United Nations in coordinating international civilian activities in Afghanistan. The Security Council has already endorsed the preliminary recommendations of the Secretary-General on the empowerment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). It is now up to the General Assembly to allocate the additional financial, human and security resources that are urgently required in order to enable UNAMA to play the enhanced role assigned by this Council in resolution 1806 (2008) and reaffirmed by the Paris Conference. That role is all the more relevant as we are facing challenges that require political and humanitarian responses — the worrisome food crisis, the precarious situation of civilians and the difficulties in promoting the protection of human rights.

Against the difficult background evident in the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/617), we fully support his call to accelerate the implementation of the Paris agenda by restoring a strong sense of urgency. The increasing asymmetric terrorist attacks by the insurgents and the high level of civilian casualties compound the complexity of the situation, overshadowing the progress made in economic development, social services and, recently, counter-narcotics activities. We cannot afford to lose political focus and momentum. We face undeniable disturbing trends that need to be reversed urgently.

For that reason, we agree on the compelling need to honour the commitments made at the Paris Conference. One of those commitments relates to the allocation of the available resources in an efficient manner, in accordance with the fundamental principles of coordination and aid effectiveness. That concerns, as mentioned by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, all the relevant actors, with no exceptions. The coordinating role of the United Nations in international civilian efforts should be consistently kept in mind, along with the principle of Afghan ownership and leadership in all sectors.

Civil-military cooperation is part of that equation. Military efforts cannot succeed in a political vacuum. In that context, we join the Special Representative in welcoming recent ministerial appointments by President Karzai.

For its part, Italy is once again playing its role. Despite budgetary constraints, we are making an additional effort on the military side by ensuring enhanced flexibility and operational capacity for our contingents. Furthermore, we have answered the calls for increased support for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy by supporting the national budget with an additional contribution of €15 million to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. Bearing in mind the vital importance of an orderly and fair electoral process, we are providing a contribution of €5 million to the voter registration project.

We are striving to bring all our efforts in line with the principles of aid effectiveness and Afghan ownership. Those principles have also characterized

our endeavours to support justice sector reform. We are pleased to note the incremental steps illustrated in the report of the Secretary-General. Yet, we are aware that more is needed in that area, beginning with a substantive improvement of the status and qualifications of judicial personnel. In that connection, what Ambassador Eide said about the quality factor among UNAMA personnel is also important. We also agree with him that the Council and the United Nations should undertake efforts to support that aspect of enhancing UNAMA.

Italy has constantly emphasized the importance of the regional dimension to the stabilization of Afghanistan and the wider area. We welcome the recent concrete signals of enhanced dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours. I would like to recall that, during his meetings in New York last month, Minister for Foreign Affairs Frattini discussed an initiative to convene an outreach ministerial event on the stabilization of the region next year during the Italian presidency of the Group of Eight.

Finally, I would like to note the demonstration of unity among members of the Security Council in the consensus adoption of resolution 1833 (2008), on the extension of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force. That vote showed the cohesion of the international community in supporting stabilization efforts in Afghanistan — a cohesion that should become a constant objective of the international community and that should be reflected as well, as Special Representative Eide repeatedly noted today, in the communication strategy of all international actors keen on stabilizing the region.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like first to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and detailed report (S/2008/617). I should also like to thank Mr. Kai Eide for the comprehensive briefing he has just given us. I welcome the efforts being made by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General despite the difficult conditions in which they are working.

I also wish to welcome the presence among us of Mr. Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and to thank him for his statement. In keeping with his advice, I shall be cautious when speaking about Afghanistan.

This meeting is taking place at a time when, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has pointed out, the situation in Afghanistan is characterized by a serious deterioration. According to the report of the Secretary-General, this may be the most difficult time since the fall of the Taliban, especially as regards the great number of civilian victims, resulting from acts of war in the first eight months of this year — an increase of 39 per cent over the same period last year. That is a cause of concern to us; but of greater concern yet is the fact that 40 per cent, or about half, of the deaths have been due to attacks by pro-Government and international forces.

We appreciate all the steps and arrangements being taken by the forces to avoid civilian casualties and damage to property. However, the figures are nevertheless quite significant, and we believe that there is room for improvement. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General has indicated that the international forces are trying to reduce the number of civilian victims. We hope that those efforts will lead to the desired results. In that regard, we also condemn the acts of insurgent forces that result in civilian casualties.

This meeting is taking place two years after the London Conference and four months after the Paris Conference, where the Afghanistan National Development Strategy was adopted. Pledges of assistance have exceeded $21 billion. It may be worth assessing the progress made in the implementation of the Strategy, especially as regards the commitments made and the performance of the Afghan Government in the area of development. We believe that, as Mr. Tanin has said, development is a very important element of security and stability.

There can be do doubt that there has been much progress in a number of areas, including in demining and combating narcotics, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General mentioned in his briefing; in the vaccination of children; and in improving regional relations and launching a dialogue between Afghanistan and its neighbours. However, we must accept that many shortcomings remain despite all the efforts and commitments. I believe that all of that must be properly assessed and that we must look into the causes that have led to the current situation.

As I said the last time I addressed the Council on this issue, I believe we all agree that the solution will require a general rapprochement, and not just recourse

to force, if we are to restore stability. We believe that inclusive national reconciliation among the various sectors of the population, as called for by President Karzai and, previously, by the Constitutional Council, is very important to establishing stability. There must also be parallel efforts in the area of development, so as to ensure dignified socio-economic conditions for all Afghan citizens, so that they do not have to turn to illegal means of earning a living. That should also contribute to the fight against corruption and extremism. The Afghan Government should thus regain the people's confidence in its ability to meet their essential needs. We hope that the latest Government reshuffle will promote development and concentrate on the various priorities.

The report of the Secretary-General of last March (S/2008/159) indicated that there had been violations of prisoners' rights and cases of abuse and torture. There were accusations with regard to lengthy arbitrary detention in detention centres. The United Nations Mission was not able to verify those accusations, and the latest report (S/2008/617) does not indicate any progress in that respect. The report indicates that the situation has remained the same and that the jails and detention centres in Afghanistan are being seriously neglected. We reiterate the importance of respect for human rights by all and the need for respect for international law.

My delegation is extremely concerned about the food crisis that the Afghan people are facing given the surge in food prices, the drought and the global financial crisis, which affects Afghanistan in the same way as it does other developing countries. We join with the Secretary-General in his call, echoed by the Afghan Vice-President, for more than $400 million to deal with the crisis. I am sure that members are aware of the misery and suffering in Afghanistan and the large number of children who live in isolated areas in mountainous regions and valleys, carrying flour on their backs from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Finally, my delegation stresses the important role of UNAMA in providing assistance. We stress the need for an enlargement of the Mission, taking into account the comments of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and for providing the Mission with the resources it needs to do its work in the different areas of the country, in line with the priorities highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, so that the Mission can accomplish its tasks. In all of this, as the representative of Italy just said, we must take account of Afghan ownership of the process and its effectiveness.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): I would like to thank Mr. Eide for his briefing to the Council today. Concurrent with Mr. Eide's appointment, the Security Council took the crucial decision to refine and expand the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). To implement the revised mandate, and given the huge challenges that UNAMA faces regarding civil-military coordination, the effectiveness of humanitarian relief and election preparations, we support an immediate increase, indeed a surge, in UNAMA's capabilities, based on the proposals made by Mr. Eide.

The United States is gravely concerned about the humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan. The situation is worsening and many lives are in jeopardy, both from possible food shortages and from extreme cold weather. The United States is the largest donor to Afghanistan, both financially and in kind. We are prepared to do more. We urge United Nations Member States to respond to the appeals of the Afghan Government, as well as of the United Nations, to avoid a worsening humanitarian situation this winter. Planning and preparations for winter should aim at assisting needy Afghans in dealing with food shortages, as well as with cold weather.

We concur with the Secretary-General's conclusion that the security situation has become more challenging as the number of anti-Government incidents has increased and the extremist Taliban and their terrorist allies have continued to wage deadly attacks on Afghan security forces, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the civilian population. But success in Afghanistan is critical not only for the Afghans, but also for the region and the broader struggle against terror and extremism. Success can be achieved despite the recent talk of doom and gloom, as referred to by Mr. Eide. Success requires that the Government in Afghanistan implement its national development strategy, making tough decisions and implementing the agreed policies, specifically in the areas of local governance, combating corruption, enforcing the rule of law, achieving economic development, the pursuit of robust counter-narcotics efforts and reform of the police forces.

We hope that the recent changes in the Cabinet proposed by President Karzai can assist with making progress with regard to those goals. We welcome the Afghan security forces taking increasing responsibility for protecting the Afghan people as their capabilities grow and as conditions warrant; indeed we believe that this is crucial.

President Karzai has committed his Government to holding election in 2009. That is very important. We welcome UNAMA's effort to support the Afghan Government in preparing for those elections. It is imperative that the international community redouble efforts to ensure credible elections. We call on the Afghan Government to maintain its commitment to carry out those elections as scheduled to further instill the culture of democratic and representative Government in the country and to sustain international support.

For Afghanistan's success, I would like to underscore the importance of the role of the country's neighbours. The recent election of a new Government in Pakistan provides an opportunity for increased cooperation between the two countries against terrorists and extremists, who threaten Afghanistan, Pakistan and, indeed, the world. The agenda for regional cooperation is clear: no sanctuary for hostile forces; no use of extremists and terrorists to advance national interests; intelligence-sharing; precluding regional geopolitical rivalry; encouraging reconciliation; and integrating Afghanistan into regional institutions and the regional economy. Progress on those fronts is crucial to Afghanistan's stability and development. Both Afghans and Pakistanis need and deserve international support to resist extremists and terrorists. The United States is committed to doing its part.

The United Nations Secretariat has its own critical role to play in facilitating and supporting UNAMA's practical needs. As a top priority, we must find ways to allow Mr. Eide to hire the people he needs and get them on board immediately, not months from now. We urge the Secretariat to do everything in its power to make sure that Mr. Eide is given the support and resources he needs to carry out his mission. Mr. Eide, in turn, needs to use those capabilities and the promising relationships he has built with the Afghans and with the international community to develop targets and plans with timelines for achieving each of the major tasks in his mandate. The United States and its partners are committed to success in Afghanistan and will adjust our approach as necessary to achieve our common goals. The United States deeply regrets the accidental loss of civilian life and we do not take this lightly. We share the Secretary-General's grave concern over the issue of civilian casualties. I want to assure the Council members that we will do everything in our power to ensure that ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom take every precaution to prevent civilian casualties. We have intensified our efforts with the Government of Afghanistan to improve coordination and communication in operations to prevent future incidents. Our military central command has issued guidance to United States forces to continue to take steps to prevent civilian casualties and to acknowledge them when they occur.

At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fundamental cause of the increasing casualties, clearly spelled out in the Secretary-General's report. The Taliban and other anti-Government elements are waging a systematic campaign of violence and intimidation against civilians. They deliberately target civilians and use them as shields. As the report points out, and as Mr. Eide mentioned in his remarks, the Taliban are increasingly resorting to asymmetric attacks on population centres, aid-related targets and non-governmental organizations.

The challenging security situation highlights the need for more forces and better civil-military coordination. On the military side, the United States, in consultation with our ISAF partners, has streamlined its chain of command to make its forces better able to carry out their mission. General McKiernan is now the commander of both ISAF and United States forces in Afghanistan and is working very closely with the Afghan security forces. The United States and its partners will send more forces to Afghanistan.

Civil-military coordination is important for success and is a crucial part of UNAMA's mandate. We expect Mr. Eide to partner with General McKiernan to carry out that task as soon as possible. Furthermore, UNAMA is at the centre of coordinating international relief efforts.

Last June, the international community endorsed the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, and there was an unprecedented level of pledges. Those are clear signs of our determination to help Afghans

succeed. As Afghans do their part, donors must also follow through on their commitments.

In closing, the Secretary-General's report accurately highlights the increasing difficulties and challenges that the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners are facing. Rather than cause mutual recrimination, those challenges should serve to reaffirm and renew mutual commitment to Afghanistan's success. By making the necessary changes and adjustments, the United States is committed to doing so and remains firmly committed to Afghanistan's success.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I too would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kai Eide, for his frank, comprehensive and convincing briefing and for his personal commitment at the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). His determined actions of recent months have already allowed us to see these concrete results from the strengthened mandate of UNAMA, as authorized by the Council last March.

As Chairman of the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions Committee, I would like to thank UNAMA for its invaluable cooperation with the Committee and with the Monitoring Team, as encouraged by the Council in resolution 1806 (2008) of 20 March.

I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement.

Belgium shares the concerns set out in the last report of the Secretary-General. Allow me here to make the following remarks.

First, there is a need to recognize the fact that, despite collective efforts, the security situation has deteriorated over the past few months. In that regard, Belgium shares the concerns voiced regarding the increase in the number of civilian victims, the majority of whom, we must recall, have been caused by the actions of insurgents making use of suicide attacks, attacking humanitarian personnel and using civilians as human shields.

The Afghan and international forces, for their part, must make every possible effort to minimize the risk of claiming civilian victims. Belgium therefore welcomes the additional guidelines given to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in September. My delegation also encourages the United Nations to continue to cooperate fully to shed full light on such incidents.

While we welcome the 19 per cent drop in poppy production this year, efforts must continue, in particular given the links to corruption and, more specifically, to the financing of terrorism, a subject to which the Al-Qaida/Taliban Committee over which I preside is very sensitive.

The solution is not a purely military one, and we are all well aware of that. Security is only one aspect that must go hand in hand with governance and development. It is not fortuitous that those elements make up the three pillars of the Afghanistan Compact adopted in London in 2006. Belgium acts in the context of such a comprehensive approach. The recent joint visit in Afghanistan of our ministers for defence and development cooperation proved that yet once again.

Aside from Belgium's participation in ISAF, my country is contributing to numerous reconstruction projects. During the aforementioned visit moreover, the minister for cooperation announced a 20 per cent increase in our contributions for the period 2007-2011, which today totals €36 million over the past five years.

As the Secretary-General quite rightly requests, if we are to reverse the recent negative trend, there is an urgent need to honour the commitments made during the Paris Conference, where consensus was achieved on taking decisive action, on the one hand, to address the serious shortcomings in governance and, on the other, to align international assistance to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

It is indeed critical that Afghan citizens rapidly see the benefits of the work of their Government and of the international community. That is all the more urgent as the humanitarian situation has also deteriorated and that major elections are planned for 2009 and 2010.

Belgium fully supports the appeal of the Secretary-General for a change of pace and direction and for further efforts at the political level. The three elements mentioned by Mr. Eide in his introductory statement — the notable improvement in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the recent ministerial reshuffle and the reorganization of the Ministry of the Interior and the police — are strong signals of hope for the Afghan people and the international community.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): I wish to begin by joining previous speakers in thanking Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing and the Secretary-General for his report.

In the past few months, the international community has recognized the increase in challenges to peace and stability in Afghanistan. Military measures remain critical to responding to the security challenges. However, other steps will be needed in addition to a military approach.

The situation in Afghanistan must be managed with a strategy that incorporates not only security actions, but also the promotion of governance and the rule of law, as well as socio-economic development. Indonesia therefore attaches primary importance to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which serves as a road map for comprehensive action over the next five years. We also attach great importance to making real progress in the implementation of the Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation and Justice.

As the drug economy has helped sustain the activities of insurgents, continued efforts to circumvent that challenge are also crucial. In that regard, we welcome the recent decrease in opium cultivation and the decline in its production.

Also critical to achieving sustainable peace in the country is an Afghan-led reconciliation process. That effort must be inclusive and all parties involved must renounce violence, respect justice, equality, freedom and tolerance, and promote consultation. We recognize, in that regard, the various recent initiatives undertaken by neighbouring countries to assist the commencement of inter-Afghan dialogue and reconciliation. We are hopeful that those initiatives will achieve tangible results.

The protection of civilians remains a critical issue in Afghanistan. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, a total of 1,445 civilians were casualties in the first eight months of 2008. My delegation therefore continues to underline the importance of compliance by all parties with international humanitarian and human rights law and the appropriate measures to ensure the protection of civilians. We also call on international forces in Afghanistan to take additional robust efforts to mitigate the risk of civilian casualties, in accordance with the Security Council resolution 1833 (2008).

My delegation is concerned over the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/617), the intensifying conflict, exacerbated by natural disasters, has worsened the situation. In that regard, we attach particular importance to expeditious resource mobilization in response to the impending crisis. Attacks on humanitarian workers and aid convoys are exceptionally deplorable. Such attacks will increase the suffering of the population in need. My delegation therefore urges that every step be taken to end such attacks immediately and permanently.

With regard to Afghan refugees, Indonesia welcomes the forthcoming international conference on return and reintegration of Afghan refugees. We are hopeful that the conference will mobilize support for the current return and reintegration of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons.

Partnerships with regional States as well as the international community will remain key to sustainable peace and development in Afghanistan. President Karzai's participation in the recent summits of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a welcome step. Most urgent at the international level is the swift honouring of pledges made at the Paris Conference. We welcome, in that regard, efforts to enhance the coordination of donor efforts and to strengthen aid effectiveness.

With regard to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), my delegation believes that the Mission will remain pertinent in assisting the country to tackle various challenges to its security and development. We, however, feel concerned over the obstacles arising from the deteriorating security situation in the country that continue to hinder the implementation of its mandate. We welcome the ongoing preparation by UNAMA to open its new provincial offices. We are hopeful that the expansion will help bring about a political surge in the country, as envisioned by the Secretary-General in his report.

Finally, Indonesia wishes to reaffirm its full support for UNAMA and its work and contribution to a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): First, I join others in thanking Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his

briefing and for his introduction of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan since March 2008. I thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan for his presence and for his statement before the Council.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/617), despite many efforts of the Government and people of Afghanistan and the international community, the situation in Afghanistan has become more challenging over the past six months. We are deeply concerned over the spread of violent and insurgent activities throughout the country, especially in the provinces adjacent to Kabul, which have contributed to increased civilian casualties. The extent and reach of violence is hampering reconstruction efforts and threatens to undermine initial achievements recorded by the Government and people of Afghanistan so far.

We are concerned that, because of that situation, as reported by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 190,000 children, most of them in the volatile southern districts of Helmand and Kandahar, had no access to a recent immunization programme and that food shortages due to drought and high prices are affecting one sixth of the country's population, making their lives — which were already very hard due to the severity of conflict and violence — even harder.

The trend of increasing attacks against aid workers, convoys and facilities, as well as those launched for whatever reason against civilians, is a cause of special concern. In that connection, we urge all parties concerned, in respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, to take all necessary measures to ensure safety for all those doing their noble humanitarian work in support of the people of Afghanistan and the innocent civilians of the country.

The aforementioned situation in Afghanistan requires that further priority be given to strengthening security, which is needed to ensure the safety of the Afghan people, to carry out humanitarian activities and socio-economic development programmes, and to create an environment conducive to a lasting political settlement. At the same time, more efforts should be made to address the root causes of conflict. Measures should be taken to create more jobs, and thus more income, for rural inhabitants so that they will be less dependent on opium cultivation, and to improve health care, education and other social services so that Afghans on opposing sides will realize that they will be better off as beneficiaries of the peacebuilding and reconstruction process rather than of violence and hostilities.

To that end, we welcome the enhanced efforts by the Afghan Government to implement the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, as well as to improve their institutional capabilities, including at the provincial level, to promote their ownership in all fields of governance and to use international aid more effectively. Afghan leadership and responsibility will be of key importance in the reconstruction process. However, given the formidable challenges they are facing, the Afghan Government and people deserve continued international assistance and support. The international community should speed up the implementation of the commitments made at the Paris Conference in June.

As an important factor of its development and stability, Afghanistan's closer cooperation with neighbouring countries and regional partners should be further encouraged. The United Nations, through UNAMA, should continue to play a key role in coordinating and monitoring international assistance to the country. We would like to stress that, apart from the need for its effective management, it is essential to ensure that international assistance target the most vulnerable among the Afghan people, especially women and children, and aim to encourage the full, equal and effective participation of local people in the decision-making process.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Viet Nam's consistent support for the Government and people of Afghanistan in their post-conflict reconstruction process. Viet Nam will continue to work with the United Nations and the international community to contribute to the success of the process in the hope that Afghanistan will soon emerge from its current difficulties to embark on a new era of lasting peace, stability, prosperity and development.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Eide for his briefing and our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement. I would like to assure the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of our full

support for the approach he has developed. Like him, we wish to express our confidence in the commitment of the international community. We should not be discouraged and we should not blame ourselves. We need to engage in passionate, determined action. There is no alternative, in any event.

UNAMA has been given a key role by the Security Council, including in the coordination of civilian aid and it is essential that all international actors actively support that coordinating role. It is also necessary to give UNAMA the resources necessary to enable it to fully carry out its mandate.

As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/617) indicates, developments in the situation over the past few months show varying results. Real progress must be acknowledged, in particular the efforts to strengthen the Afghan National Army and the launching of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, as well as some progress in the area of economic and social development. We must also acknowledge the progress made in the fight against drug trafficking, reflected in the reduction in opium production and the enhanced international cooperation in preventing access to chemical precursors for heroin production. As Mr. Eide pointed out, the recent ministerial reshuffle shows that President Karzai truly wants to make his Government more effective.

We also see, however, the persistence of disturbing elements regarding, for example, the security situation, the risk of humanitarian crisis this winter and the human rights situation. The problem of good governance, in particular the fight against corruption, remains a challenge that will require increased efforts on the part of the Afghan Government in addition to the measures taken over recent months.

We too are concerned with regard to the issue of civilian victims. As Mr. Kai Eide emphasized, civilian casualties result mainly from anti-Government activities. France has very strict rules of engagement, but we are aware of the need to continue the efforts undertaken by the international forces to avoid any civilian victims. We are determined to work resolutely towards that end with our allies and partners.

The difficulties and challenges faced by Afghanistan should not obscure the progress made during the past seven years. I wish to stress in particular the 25 per cent drop in the infant mortality rate, the 6 million children — one third of whom are girls — who are now attending school and the establishment and continued strengthening of Afghan democratic institutions.

The Afghan people clearly expressed their choice for democracy and stability in 2004 and 2005, and we must help them to prepare for the upcoming elections in 2009 and 2010, which will be crucial to completing the democratic process.

We share the sense of urgency expressed by the Special Representative. The international community and Afghanistan have a strategy defined in the Afghanistan Compact, which was adopted in 2006 in London, which has now been extended by the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the road map that was drawn up during the international Paris Conference. The road map is based on a renewed partnership around mutual commitments aimed at better taking into account the specific needs of the population. That is a fundamental point, because the involvement of the international community will be judged in part by the improvement of the situation of the population, which will also enable us to determine whether we have attained our objective. In addition to the initial individual institutional steps that have already been announced, such as the reorganization of the Afghan Government and reform of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), decisive measures must be taken quickly by the international community and by the Afghan authorities to implement their commitments. The latter will be called upon to share a greater degree of responsibility in the reconstruction and development process.

Speaking for the presidency of the European Union, I wish to reiterate here that Afghanistan and the United Nations can count on the unswerving support of France and the European Union. In conformity with the framework established by the Council of the European Union in May 2008, we will continue to play a major role in the mobilization of the international community in support of Afghanistan.

The European Union is the second-largest financial contributor to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. It contributes, in particular, to building the capacity of the Afghan police, which is a priority for the international community, especially through the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan, whose numbers there will be significantly increased. On the military front, I wish to recall that 25 of the European

Union member States are participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and together account for nearly half of the total personnel.

A lasting solution to the crisis in Afghanistan cannot be only military; it must also be political, first and foremost. Our objective is to help the Government to establish the structures of a democratic State which will ensure the security of its citizens, respect human rights and promote economic and social development. That will require a comprehensive approach based on better integration of the civilian and military components. We encourage development by the Afghan authorities of a national political dialogue that is as broad as possible and at all levels. That dialogue should lead to respect for the constitution and obviously cannot include the proponents of jihad, whom we must continue to fight until their defeat.

As stressed in particular by Mr. Eide and the Permanent Representative of Italy, stability in Afghanistan is intrinsically linked to the stability of the region. It is therefore essential to develop a coordinated approach at the regional level. France is prepared to contribute to that actively, as Mr. Bernard Kouchner, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, has announced, through the proposed organization of a regional conference bringing together Afghanistan and its neighbours, as an extension of the work done during the international Conference in Support of Afghanistan.

We welcome the strengthening of cooperation between Afghanistan and its partners to fight threats such as those of terrorism and drug trafficking, and the improved relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, whose new democratic Government has shown its determination to fight terrorism.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm emphatically the resolute commitment of France, both within ISAF and alongside the Special Representative, to support their efforts to ensure that the Afghan people, as soon possible and as they well deserve, will find the path to peace, security and development.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Thank you, Sir, for presiding over this very important debate. Let me begin by welcoming the Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2008/617) and by thanking Special Representative Eide for his briefing and for the leadership and commitment he has shown since his appointment in March. We commend him and his team for all their efforts in what we know are very challenging circumstances. We also welcome the contribution to today's debate made by Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan.

Strong United Nations leadership must continue to be at the heart of the international approach in Afghanistan. We welcome Mr. Eide's work to restructure and strengthen the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) so that it can better deliver in terms of our agreed priorities. We shall take very seriously the eight steps that he has proposed should be completed in the coming six months.

We look forward to agreement later this year on an increase in resources for the UNAMA mission to allow it to increase its crucial work on governance, on implementing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, on aid effectiveness, on the humanitarian challenge and on improving United Nations and broader international coordination. That work is central to long-term success in Afghanistan, and UNAMA's work in support of the Government of Afghanistan to help prepare for elections next year is particularly important. Broad participation is crucial, and the United Kingdom welcomes the work now under way on voter registration.

The focus of the international debate is often on security. That is for very good reasons, but it is a mistake to focus on security alone, or indeed in isolation from issues of governance and development. As many of those involved in Afghanistan have been saying for some time, the insurgency cannot be defeated by military means alone. We have heard that several times around this table today. The military effort will of course remain a crucial element of our approach for some time to come, as the Special Representative has said. But equally important are efforts by the Afghan Government, supported by UNAMA and others in the international community, to deliver effective governance, encourage economic growth and build an inclusive democratic process that provides a voice for all those prepared to pursue their goals through political means.

The challenge for all of us is to enable the Afghans to deliver that vision for themselves. Progress has been made. The Afghan National Army is 65,000 strong and continues to grow, both in number and in professionalism. It already plays a central role alongside international forces in containing the

insurgency. The significant progress it has made shows that Afghanistan has the capacity to deliver once it has the infrastructure in place.

Elsewhere, we have seen less progress, particularly on governance and on tackling corruption. Building a professional police force is essential if we are to deliver the benefits of central Government to ordinary Afghans, and we need more progress in that area. The appointment of a new Minister of the Interior is a welcome step, as are the other ministerial changes announced last weekend.

All the challenges facing Afghanistan are rendered more difficult by the pernicious influence of narcotics. We have seen some progress this year, as the Special Representative pointed out — a 19 per cent decrease in overall opium production and an increase in the number of poppy-free provinces from 13 last year to 18 this year. We cannot be complacent, however. The growth in production in areas of poor security, such as Helmand, remains a real concern. The United Kingdom volunteered to be the lead partner country on counter-narcotics to help the Afghan Government, and it was no coincidence that we agreed that our forces should be deployed to Helmand, one of the most demanding provinces in terms of restoring security, which is an essential step to ridding the province of narcotics production.

Concern has rightly been expressed about civilian casualties, including in the Secretary-General's report. As I have said before in this Chamber, any civilian death is a death too many. That is why the international forces in Afghanistan go to great lengths to minimize the risk of civilian casualties, including by warning local populations of impending operations whenever possible. It is right, however, that we constantly re-evaluate and, where necessary, improve our procedures on the basis of experience. We should also constantly bear in mind the Special Representative's remarks about where the primary responsibility for civilian casualties lies. It lies with the insurgency and with those responsible for what he calls "asymmetric" attacks — that is, attacks aimed at civilians or heedless of civilian casualties.

The Secretary-General's report rightly highlights the range of challenges we face in Afghanistan. We will succeed in tackling those challenges only if we maintain a comprehensive approach. Security cannot come without sustained work on governance, development and capacity-building, and vice versa. Mr. Eide has also spoken recently of the need for the international community to demonstrate renewed energy and commitment to a lasting solution for Afghanistan. The United Kingdom supports that call and will continue to play its part in securing a stable and prosperous future for its Afghan friends.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for the valuable information he has provided.

It is concerning to note that the situation in Afghanistan remains one of the most complex issues on the Security Council's agenda. We have welcomed the convening and outcome of the Paris Conference, which laid the groundwork for a political and financial partnership between Afghanistan and the international community to rebuild the country. If such a partnership is to produce the desired results, political and security conditions must be established to provide for a calmer climate.

Unfortunately, we must note that fighting has increased recently between the insurgents, on the one hand, and the Afghan forces and the international security forces, on the other, claiming numerous victims among the civilian population and humanitarian personnel, while a high level of insecurity continues to reign. The resolve of the insurgents, even in provinces that have been relatively calm until recently, is complicating the task of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which must expand its provincial offices and, above all, be able to make full use of its means and capacities to fulfil its mandate effectively.

Burkina Faso believes that it is highly urgent to identify the best possible strategy for resolving the crisis, in particular through negotiation and the strengthening of political dialogue. That would allow for the creation of conditions most conducive to ensuring, in the short term, the organization of presidential elections in 2009 and legislative elections in 2010, and, in the longer term, the establishment of a lasting and definitive peace throughout the country, including the effective resolution of the thorny issue of drug trafficking.

We remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. While we welcome the measures undertaken to meet that challenge and the United Nations appeals to that end, we urge the international community to remain vigilant as it helps the Afghan people to mitigate their own suffering. We make the same appeal for an effective approach to addressing the fate of refugees and displaced persons. In that regard, we welcome the convening on 19 November, at the initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Afghan Government, of an international conference on the timetable for their return and reintegration.

Another major source of concern are the ongoing human rights violations — in particular summary executions and sexual or gender-based violence, including against children — committed in conditions of impunity. We call for vigorous and courageous measures to be taken along the lines of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan of 19 May 2008.

My delegation welcomes the political progress achieved despite everything, including the adoption of important legislation. Although political differences do not yet allow for the adoption of an electoral law, the adoption of draft legislation on the Independent Election Commission represents a significant milestone in the framework of the electoral process under way. Moreover, given the extreme sensitivity of the pending deadlines, every effort must be made to strengthen security, along the lines of measures already taken by the United Nations forces currently on the ground and the Organization as a whole in support of the National Police. We also note the adoption of an anti-corruption law, the establishment of the High Office of Oversight, and the improved performance of public administration, local governance and the administration of justice. We warmly encourage the authorities to pursue and intensify such efforts.

A definitive solution to the Afghan problem will also hinge on strengthened regional and international cooperation. We are gratified by the numerous signs of reviving relations between Afghanistan and other countries of the region, which augurs well for subregional and regional stability. As to international cooperation, I note once again the current and future importance of the contribution of the international community, including the United Nations, to peace, economic recovery and national reconstruction in Afghanistan.

UNAMA should be able to rely on the support of the Security Council in fulfilling its mandate, which we have just renewed.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): We, too, join in welcoming Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and thank him for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2008/617). We also welcome the Ambassador of Afghanistan, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and thank him for his statement earlier.

The international community has a shared interest in a stable, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan. It is for that reason that my delegation believes that the challenges facing Afghanistan, which are detailed in the latest report of the Secretary-General, should not be underestimated. Key among those challenges are the deterioration of the security situation, the increase in civilian casualties, the continued human rights deficiencies and the worsening humanitarian situation. The persistent threat to security posed by insurgent and terrorist activities is the main challenge to Afghanistan's nation-building efforts and stability.

Paragraphs 16 to 22 of the Secretary-General's report clearly illustrate the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, especially in recent months. In that context, we deplore all attempts to destabilize the country, in particular terrorist attacks on innocent civilians, including children. It is also worrying that, as noted in the report, the deteriorating security situation has hampered the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Another area of concern is civilian casualties. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General, the country has experienced an increase in civilian casualties. My delegation condemns all attacks targeting innocent civilians. We also call upon the international forces in Afghanistan to minimize the risk of civilian casualties.

Despite the aforementioned challenges in Afghanistan, the country is slowly making progress in some areas. One notable area is that of counter-narcotics efforts. South Africa is encouraged by the reported decrease in opium cultivation and the decline in opium production. We encourage the Government of

Afghanistan and other stakeholders to continue their efforts to address the narcotics problem. We further encourage the Government to improve its institutional capacity for service-delivery and development in support of viable alternatives to poppy cultivation.

We also welcome the notable progress in the fields of the rule of law, governance and regional cooperation. We underscore the importance of regional cooperation as an effective means of promoting development and stability in Afghanistan. In that context, my delegation commends the improved relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours, in particular Pakistan. We appreciate the resolve already expressed by both countries to combat extremism and terrorism by further improving existing mechanisms for the exchange of information.

In order to address the challenges facing Afghanistan, a holistic and comprehensive approach is essential. In that regard, improved coordination in the military, political, humanitarian and development areas is of vital importance. It is for that reason that South Africa continues to support the central and impartial role of UNAMA and its activities in leading the efforts of the international community. We agree with the need to strengthen UNAMA's coordination capacity, in order to enable the Mission to make a significant difference on the ground.

South Africa reaffirms its support for the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy under the ownership of the Afghan people. We also commend the central role played by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact.

Finally, we commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Eide, and the personnel of UNAMA for their tireless efforts in Afghanistan.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Kai Eide, for his full and informative briefing and for his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in these difficult and challenging times. At the same time, we are pleased to welcome the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and we thank him for his statement.

My country, Croatia, is encouraged by hard work that UNAMA has carried out to date, helping to coordinate the humanitarian efforts of the international community in support of the Afghan Government. My delegation would like to reiterate its full support for UNAMA's leading role in that regard. As was clearly stated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/617), only if an absolute readiness of all stakeholders to be coordinated is present will UNAMA be in a position to successfully execute its mandate.

Croatia is seriously concerned about the worsening of the security situation in Afghanistan. The insurgency is intensifying and is now negatively affecting areas that previously were relatively calm. Of particular concern is the situation in the border region with Pakistan, where hostile activities have significantly increased. The change of tactics employed by insurgent — towards attacks of an asymmetric nature, often carried out in highly inhabited areas — has significantly contributed to the rise in civilian casualties.

In that context, Croatia believes that strict compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law and the implementation of adequate measures to ensure the protection of civilians should be effected throughout Afghanistan. We especially welcome the efforts undertaken to date by the international forces to minimize the risk of civilian casualties.

Croatia is concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation, brought on primarily as a result of the ongoing insurgency and the negative impact of the conflict on humanitarian access. The current drought and the high global food prices have only exacerbated the situation. We therefore welcome the second joint emergency appeal for relief to address high food prices and the drought crisis, launched to help people affected by the current conditions. Highly aware of the acuteness of the problem, Croatia has just donated $50,000 through the World Food Programme to alleviate food shortages in the province of Badakhshan.

It is a well-known fact that the insurgency in Afghanistan is fuelled predominantly by the drug trade. With that in mind, Croatia is encouraged by the new report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), according to which there has been a 19 per cent decrease in opium cultivation and a 6 per

cent decline in the production of opium. We welcome the renewed efforts aimed at curbing that scourge, undertaken with the approval of the Afghan Government and consistent with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Croatia is pleased to see that international efforts to counter the flow of chemical precursors for illicit heroin manufacturing, recently strongly supported by the Security Council through the adoption of resolution 1817 (2008), are already bearing fruit. We commend the International Narcotics Control Board for its leading role, and we welcome the greater regional cooperation on this issue.

Inextricably linked to the problem of opium cultivation is the problem of the rampant corruption that plunders Afghanistan. We therefore welcome the adoption of the law on corruption and the establishment of the High Office of Oversight to combat corruption. It is evident that such measures are necessary not only to demonstrate the seriousness of the Afghan Government with regard to its commitments to the international community, but, even more, to strengthen the trust and confidence of ordinary Afghans in the present Administration.

Croatia is of the opinion that the upcoming elections are a key priority and a real test of Afghanistan's democratic progress. While we regret that continuing disagreement within the National Assembly has prevented the adoption of a new electoral law, we are confident that all necessary legislation — including legislation on the Independent Election Commission, the lead coordinating body for the elections — will be swiftly adopted.

On security and military matters, we welcome the continuing improvement of the Afghan National Army and support the Afghan request to raise the Army's recruitment ceiling to 134,000 by 2010. We especially welcome the Afghan Government's assumption of greater responsibility for security in the country, with the Afghan National Army taking over lead responsibility for security in Kabul. Croatia is currently examining arrangements to send to Afghanistan additional teams to be included in the training and mentoring of the Afghan National Army, within an operational framework and with a liaison team.

We commend all regional efforts aimed at the stabilization and the further development of Afghanistan. The country's neighbours have an important role to play in supporting the Afghan Government's effort to secure its borders, but also in acquiring joint opportunities afforded by trade, energy market integration and infrastructure construction. We welcome the recent international agreements entered into by Afghanistan and its neighbours and express our full support for the efforts already put in place by the Special Representative aimed at underscoring the potential of regional economic development and cooperation.

We are also fully aware that there is no purely military solution to the situation in Afghanistan. In order for the Afghan Government and the international community to succeed, they need to apply a comprehensive approach, uniting military, political, humanitarian and development activities. Supporting a comprehensive approach also means supporting Afghan efforts to bring disaffected Afghans into the mainstream of society and cause them to renounce violence and accept Afghanistan's constitution and the relevant Security Council resolutions. We share the view that UNAMA has an important role to play in supporting Afghan-led reconciliation activities in whatever ways the Government of Afghanistan considers appropriate. Furthermore, the crisis in Afghanistan is not only a national and regional, but also a global problem. The fight against terrorism can be won only through the concerted efforts of the relevant international actors.

Croatia would like affirm its strong determination expressed at the Conference held in June in Paris to work closely under the Afghan leadership in support of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, based on the Afghanistan Compact of 2006. Similarly, let me reiterate our support for the assessment of the Special Representative that the priorities identified at the Paris Conference are sufficiently covered by UNAMA's mandate, as laid out in resolution 1806 (2008). In that context, we welcome the changes announced by President Karzai to his cabinet, which we see as a clear sign of the Afghan determination to rigorously implement the Paris agenda.

We fully concur with the assessment of the Secretary-General that greater human, administrative and security resources need to be mobilized in order for UNAMA to fulfil its mandate and achieve the established priorities. In that regard, we commend UNAMA's decision to open new provincial offices,

thus further strengthening its outreach capability, which is crucial for the implementation of its mandate. A sense of urgency is clearly present.

Finally, throughout this year Croatia has raised the level of its military contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by approximately 30 per cent. Additionally, we have initiated development projects in the province of Badakhshan in the sectors of health and education, in accordance with the priorities of the Afghan Government. That is all to confirm our forceful commitment to the efforts of the entire international community to rebuild a free, safe and stable Afghanistan, as well as our strong support for the Government and the people of Afghanistan.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Eide for the efforts that he has been making in the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We also thank him for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for having introduced the periodic report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/617).

We share the Secretary-General's concern over the continuing deterioration of the military and political situation in Afghanistan. Here, we note in particular the stepping up of terrorist activity by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups. The attack on the President of Afghanistan, widespread terrorist acts in Kabul and other regions of the country and increasingly frequent attacks on humanitarian personnel and United Nations staff members, responsibility for which has been claimed by the Taliban, are clear evidence of uncompromising aggression by extremists who are striving to obtain power and who are ready to sacrifice the lives of totally innocent people in order to achieve to their goals.

Under such conditions, there is a need to unswervingly follow the policy of isolating extremist leaders, first and foremost those who are on the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), while maintaining for rank and file Taliban members who are not tainted by military crimes the opportunity for a return to peaceful life. It is precisely such a policy that should be maintained by the United Nations Mission within the framework of the implementation of its mandate.

We believe that the tactic of pacification of the Taliban and other extremist groups is inherently flawed. Any attempts to play up to them are fraught with irreparable damage to the positions of the central power and the leading anti-Taliban political forces. Unfortunately, the idea of reconciliation with the extremists continues to find supporters both among representatives of international organizations and within Afghanistan.

The actions of the terrorists and of insurgents who have not laid down their arms are fuelled primarily by drug dealing. More and more often, terrorists and drug dealers are closely coordinating their actions, while international efforts to combat the Afghan drug threat, unfortunately, are not yielding visible results. Moreover, we are observing an unprecedented rise in the production of drugs in Afghanistan, which is a direct threat to the entire international community.

Under such conditions, we believe that it is vitally necessary to step up anti-drug efforts both in the territory of Afghanistan — including the destruction of drug crops, the pursuit of drug dealers, the implementation of alternative agricultural crops and curbing unemployment — and in the territory around Afghanistan, and to do so through the coordinating role of the United Nations and with the participation of neighbouring countries, and through the establishment of a system of anti-drug and financial security belts.

There is also a need to make fuller use of the potential of regional organizations that have demonstrated the effectiveness of their work in this area, in particular the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. At present, the most effective mechanism for making use of international efforts to counter the flow of Afghan drugs is the anti-drug Operation Channel carried out since 2003 under the aegis of the CSTO.

We also believe that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) cannot remain on the sidelines of international efforts to counter the drug threat coming from Afghanistan. It is important to note that resolution 1833 (2008), recently adopted by the Security Council, is aimed at focusing ISAF efforts on interaction with the Government of Afghanistan and other interested parties, including regional players, in this sphere. Without combating the drug threat, given

the close link between terrorist activity and drug production, ISAF's activities will not be fully effective.

We are ready to further develop practical interaction between the CTSO and NATO in counter-terrorism and anti-drug work. On several occasions, we have informed our NATO partners of this fact. However, so far, NATO has not responded in any way to our proposal, although objectively such interaction would make it possible to obtain better results from the efforts of ISAF and the forces now active in Afghanistan and headed by NATO. A clear example is the agreement reached in Bucharest on the simplification of procedures for transit through Russian territory of non-military cargoes in order to secure the rear of ISAF in Afghanistan.

Another important sphere for cooperation is the NATO-Russian Council project for joint training of personnel for anti-drug agencies of Afghanistan and the transit countries of Central Asia at the Ministry of Interior training centre in Domodedovo. That is a real means of interaction in countering the Afghan drug threat.

We share the Secretary-General's concern regarding the increasingly frequent deaths of peaceful Afghan civilians as a result of the actions not only of extremists but also of international military presences. Such incidents are clearly undermining the trust of the local population in international efforts in Afghanistan. There is a need for ISAF to take measures to prevent the deaths of peaceful civilians, first and foremost of children, as a result of indiscriminate or excessive use of force, including bombings.

Here, we should like once again to emphasize that there is no alternative to the imperative need enshrined in a recent decision of the Security Council, namely the need for compliance with international humanitarian law to prevent loss of life among the civilian population. That is an extremely important objective in the context of the long-term stabilization of Afghanistan, which was reaffirmed as well by the Afghan leadership and by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Russia is convinced that effectively settling the situation in Afghanistan and resolving the serious problems now facing the country's leadership will be impossible without an integrated approach on the part of the international community, led by the United Nations, and without delegating to Afghan leaders greater independence in resolving inter-Afghan problems.

We support the initiative of the French Government and others that organized the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan, which was held in Paris on 12 June and in which we were active participants. We believe that its outcome should be seen as a kind of road map for the attainment of the objectives now facing Kabul, which are reflected in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy for 2008 to 2013. We believe that the international community's efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan and to counter the terrorist and extremist threats emanating from that country will not provide effective results until conditions are created for the Afghan Government to independently ensure security within the territory of the country. Of particular importance here is the formation of genuinely operational national armed forces and law enforcement agencies, equipped with modern arms.

The steps now being undertaken to rectify the security situation must be backed by efforts towards the socio-economic revival of the Afghan State. Our country must continue to be an active participant in those efforts. Russia is actively working in that area, participating in the implementation of a number of projects to restore energy and transport infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Another contribution of ours to stabilizing the economic situation of the country is the agreement signed in Moscow on a settlement of the Afghan debt to Russia, by which the Afghan debt to our country was reduced from $11.112 billion to $730 million. In order to promote the development of higher education in Afghanistan, since 2007 the Russian Federation has been awarding 80 scholarships per year to pay the tuition fees of Afghan students in universities of our country. Russia has also provided Afghanistan with military technical assistance on a non-reimbursable basis, totalling $220 million. We are ready to continue making the appropriate efforts.

Mr. De Vengoechea (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kai Eide, for the briefing he has just presented. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his presentation to the members of the Council.

The picture painted by the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/617) shows how difficult and complicated the work of Mr. Eide and his team has been. We therefore commend the work that he has done to date and wish him every success in the coming months, which we know will be of crucial importance.

"Afghanistan is at a crossroads" is a phrase we have heard before, but it has never been more fitting than at the present moment. The wave of setbacks suffered by the international community in recent months has presented us with two options: we can continue with the same strategy, becoming bogged down in an unending asymmetric war in which nobody wins and everyone comes out a loser, particularly the Afghan people. Or, on the other hand, we could change course and accelerate our steps towards rebuilding the country, not by exclusively using force but through a dialogue that seeks national reconciliation, which can sow the seeds of peace, human security and social development.

Panama is of the opinion that, to change course in Afghanistan, two actions must be taken as a matter of urgency. First, we must recognize that, as history has taught us, a military victory in Afghanistan is not merely a vague notion; it cannot be achieved in practice. If we think that victory in Afghanistan means totally removing insurgent groups, then we are mistaken. The Afghan insurgency is much more than a group of terrorists; it arises from a complex social movement with strong roots in local culture.

It is certain that greater commitments on the part of the members of the international security forces are necessary to bring peace to the country, particularly the most violent parts. But beyond that, Panama believes that the Government of Afghanistan, with the support of its international partners, must redouble its efforts to integrate moderate elements of the insurgency, including those members of the Taliban who renounce violence, in order to reestablish the Afghan State. Without them, national reconciliation, which is the basis of any stable, multicultural society, will be impossible.

The second action to be taken is to increase the political commitment to Afghanistan. That does not just include increased political, diplomatic and economic aid for reconstruction, but also redoubled efforts so that ordinary Afghans feel that their country is changing for the better and that it is improving because of the actions of its Government and the international community.

As indicated in the most recent report of the Secretary-General, such action requires great efforts to, among other things, establish the rule of law throughout the country, root out the corruption which permeates certain parts of the bureaucracy and improve the standard of living of each citizen, particularly those who live in remotest parts of the country.

Ultimately, a reconstructed State is worth little if its people live in poverty and insecurity and do not enjoy the dividends of peace. Such a situation leads only to desperation, violence and extremism.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2008/617) and Mr. Kai Eide for his briefing this morning, updating the written report. We are also grateful for the statement of His Excellency Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan. Like the representative of Panama, I would also like to thank the presidency for having enabled us to hear from Afghanistan prior to members of the Council taking the floor.

With regard to the situation on the ground and the report of the Secretary-General, the Secretary-General states clearly and repeatedly that the situation in Afghanistan, despite some progress, has suffered a marked deterioration, particularly in the area of security. According to the report, there has been a 44 per cent increase in the number of incidents between August 2007 and August 2008. That deterioration in the security situation, however, as the report clearly indicates, is the result of a combination of diverse factors. Mr. Eide has given us an additional explanation as to what that means. We would like to draw on some aspects of what he said.

The subject of governance is at the heart of the challenges posed by this situation and of the combination of factors to which we have referred. On that subject, the Secretary-General states, in his report:

> "Despite those positive developments, the key challenge for the central Government will be to create capacity at the sub-national level, where the lack of resources, as well as corruption, continues to have a crippling effect." (*S/2008/617, para. 45*)

At this meeting, we would like to highlight and emphasize our concern about the issue of corruption, which is mentioned by the Secretary-General in the paragraph just cited. In the same context, the report points out that the atmosphere of impunity perpetuates the notion that crime and the abuse of power are acceptable. Clearly, for the Security Council, that is unacceptable.

We cannot fail to express our concern at the increase in the number of civilian victims. The majority of those casualties have been caused by the murderous hand of the insurgents. But, unfortunately, some have also been caused by failed actions on the part of the international forces. Unfortunately, seriously and disturbingly, the extremists have even attacked humanitarian convoys, including those of the United Nations.

The threatened food crisis, which is not exclusive to Afghanistan, is the result of internal and external factors and must be addressed by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community with the required urgency and assiduity, for humanitarian and strategic reasons alike. In that connection, all timely cooperation that the international community can provide to Afghanistan and its Government to reduce and alleviate the threat of the food crisis will play a role that is not only humanitarian, but also strategic. The more hunger increases, the greater the risk that other sectors will be absorbed into the extremist insurgency.

We do not wish to ignore the positive aspects of the report, in particular the reduced production of the raw materials for opium and the monitoring of the importation of the chemical precursors necessary for its manufacture; the adoption of important laws by Parliament; and, as Ambassador Tanin informed us, the 300 per cent increase in manufacturing in Afghanistan since 2001.

Finally, we wish to ask Mr. Eide a few questions. First, apart from his hope and his personal conviction, what makes him believe that the recent political changes, particularly in the interior and agriculture ministries, are positive elements or developments, as he said in his statement? Secondly, both in the Secretary-General's report and in Mr. Eide's own briefing this morning, we perceive — and if we are mistaken, we ask him to correct us — that there is a complaint regarding the issue of coordination, which is so essential that it was central to the mandate given to UNAMA under Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) in May. The question is: What can the Council do to cooperate further with Mr. Eide and his team on that particular aspect and others that he considers important?

It is pointed out quite rightly in the report that coordination can be provided so long as there is a will to be coordinated, but I would like Mr. Eide to explain to us further what the obstacles are, because in our previous resolution, as I said, coordination was central to the tasks added to the new mandate.

Finally, since this is a piece of information provided by the Ambassador and the Special Representative, I wonder whether they can explain why, given the tripling of manufacturing in Afghanistan over the past seven years, the unemployment and poverty rates remain so high.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of China.

First of all, I thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his comprehensive briefing. We welcome the international Conference on Afghanistan held in Paris in June and the National Development Strategy formulated by the Afghan Government. We support the continued central role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in coordinating the international community's assistance to Afghanistan in accordance with Security Council resolution 1806 (2008).

The Government of Afghanistan currently faces many grave challenges. In particular, the continued deterioration in the security situation, the increase in violence and terrorist attacks and the heavy civilian casualties caused by the conflict have aroused grave concern on the part of the international community. In that connection, I should like to emphasize the following points.

First, the international community must make a great effort to help Afghanistan resolve its security problems. Essentially, the security issue requires the Government and the people of Afghanistan to make their own efforts. The international community should allocate greater resources to helping the country accelerate the build-up of its army and police force and

to strengthening its capacity to independently maintain national security and social stability. We urge all ethnic groups and parties in Afghanistan to act in the long-term interests of the country and its people, to continue to foster and practice the culture of reconciliation and to preserve and enhance the authority of the central Government. We urge the international forces to take every possible preventive measure and to do their utmost to avoid civilian casualties resulting from military action.

Secondly, during the period ahead, the international community should focus on ensuring the smooth holding of presidential elections in Afghanistan, for which voter registration recently began. In the coming months, UNAMA and the International Security Assistance Force should make it a priority to focus on providing services for the general elections and, in particular, on ensuring a secure environment for those elections.

Thirdly, the achievement of long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan will depend essentially on economic development and improvements in the standard of living. The recent drought and high food prices have further aggravated the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, which poses a huge threat to the country's social security and stability. The international community must honour its commitment to providing assistance and assisting the Government, step by step, in implementing the National Development Strategy.

As a friendly neighbour, China attaches great importance to stability and development in Afghanistan. We are prepared to continue assisting the country to the best of our ability.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call on the representative of India.

Mr. Sen (India): Let me begin by formally congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to express appreciation for the scheduling of today's debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the situation in that country, which is a topic of immediate interest to our delegation. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/617) and thank Ambassador Eide for his comprehensive briefing.

The latest report of the Secretary-General makes it clear that we stand at a very difficult juncture in Afghanistan. The escalation in asymmetric attacks to include areas that were cleared of the Taliban and Al-Qaida is a deeply worrying sign. The fact that civilians, humanitarian workers, United Nations convoys and diplomatic representations — including our mission in Kabul — have been attacked clearly underlines the barbarity of the foe that we face.

The escalating civilian death toll is truly distressing, but the ultimate responsibility for those casualties must be laid squarely at the door of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and those who support and empower them. Such callous violence underlines the need to ensure that care be taken in our collective actions and messages. We must avoid giving them a sense of comfort or a hint of desperation; most of all, we must not dignify them by according terrorists parity with the forces of order. It is in that context that we feel a sense of some discomfort at the references in the report to casualties caused by anti-Government forces and pro-Government forces.

The course ahead may be difficult, but it is clear. We have no other option but to collectively work on a three-pronged strategy in Afghanistan. One element in that must be security, for without security neither the Afghan people nor those of our own countries will see the long-awaited peace dividend after decades of privation in Afghanistan. A second element must be to raise governance capacities in Afghanistan, otherwise we run the risk of placing responsibility upon our Afghan partners without ensuring that they have the wherewithal to live up to it. The third element is the regional aspect, because unless Afghanistan is at peace within its region and vice versa, we cannot hope to stabilize Afghanistan solely from within. I should like to briefly elaborate on those three interrelated aspects.

First, on security, now is not the moment for doubts or hesitation in implementing robust measures within Afghanistan, while expanding coordinated politico-military efforts beyond Afghanistan's borders. We need to go much further in realizing the well-established objective of degrading the ability of the Taliban to fight, while simultaneously denying them safe havens, finances and armaments. There must be a much closer alignment between the consistent application of force wherever terrorist groups are present and the political objectives of our efforts in

Afghanistan, in which UNAMA must play an important role.

That brings me to my second point, which relates to development and international assistance. With the adoption of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy at the Paris Conference in June, we now have a clear road map. In the new mandate of UNAMA, we have a designated guide to help us align our assistance in accordance with the Strategy. The onus is upon us to take forward our efforts in a manner that coheres with the objectives set out in the Strategy. In that, UNAMA and the Afghan Government must play a leading role.

We share the sense reflected in the Secretary-General's report of the need for the international community to provide not just the resources but also the political momentum to "reverse negative trends and accelerate progress in those areas where we have achieved successes" (*S/2008/617, para. 6*). In the particular context of the United Nations, it is now essential that we back our stated commitment to that new role for UNAMA by ensuring that it actually has the resources to do so.

We also echo the call made by several speakers for greater efforts to address the worsening humanitarian situation, in particular the food crisis.

In the specific context of resources, India also supports the increasing streamlining of assistance through the Afghan national budget. Sustainable progress depends on our ability to mentor capacity-building in all sectors of governance, including the budgetary process as much as other mechanisms of Government. At the same time, we must also ensure that adequate resources are made available for such newly trained Government agencies. It is for that reason that capacity-building is a priority element in each of India's assistance programmes in Afghanistan. I should in that context like to add that India has recently announced an increase in its commitment to Afghanistan, which will now amount to $1.2 billion. We are also pleased to have completed the Zaranj-Delaram highway, which is one of the three major infrastructure projects India is undertaking in Afghanistan.

Regional cooperation is the third leg of the triad of elements that must be implemented in parallel to stabilize Afghanistan. That includes but is not limited to regional economic cooperation. Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and its membership in other regional groups, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, are aimed at revitalizing Afghanistan's historic linkages with the countries of its region.

The central challenge that remains, however, is to ensure that programmes evolved in such regional processes are actually implemented. Those include resolving impediments that hinder the expansion of commercial and economic linkages, including barriers to effective overland trade and transit and to the operation of mechanisms to deal with the challenge posed by trafficking in drugs, cross-border terrorism and so on. Eventually, every challenge is an opportunity, but we need to make greater efforts to implement measures before we can benefit from the opportunities.

In conclusion, I must reiterate the need to avoid excessive expectations. While it is tempting to attempt to replicate our own socio-economic models in a country that needs every form of assistance after decades of conflict, we cannot realistically resolve all of Afghanistan's problems at once. We must therefore accept that progress will continue to take place sector by sector, partially and sometimes even episodically. Unless we display patience and perseverance, however, we cannot ensure that we will truly follow a demand-driven approach on the ground, and, without such an approach, our best efforts will not have the necessary legitimacy. It is for that reason that we reiterate the importance of an Afghan-led process of prioritization of tasks.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Kai Eide for his very helpful briefing this morning. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/617) is also appreciated.

We share the Secretary-General's candid assessment of the challenging situation in Afghanistan. The security and humanitarian situation, in particular, is of serious concern. At the same time, we should acknowledge the significant achievement of State-building efforts over the past seven years. With the resolute efforts of the Government and people of Afghanistan and the united support of the international community, we strongly believe that the situation can be reversed. Today's meeting will be an important opportunity to demonstrate our unwavering

commitment to assisting Afghanistan to achieve its aspirations.

The security situation is of paramount concern. As the insurgents have come to rely more on asymmetric attacks, the number of innocent civilian victims has increased. We are deeply concerned that even humanitarian workers and their convoys have increasingly become targets. A Japanese aid worker was killed recently. Such heinous attacks are not acceptable. We condemn all attacks against those innocents who are genuinely supporting Afghanistan.

Afghan security forces must be strengthened urgently. Japan fully supports the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board decision to expand the Afghan National Army. The reform of the Afghan National Police and the Ministry of the Interior should be also accelerated. Japan has supported the efforts of the Afghan Government by providing assistance for the police payroll through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan. In order to improve the security situation, the issue of governance of the central and local Governments is essential and must be seriously addressed. We expect commitments for anti-corruption efforts to be followed through and effective measures to be taken.

International forces are playing an indispensable role in the security of the country. Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 1833 (2008) as a demonstration of the solidarity of the international community in the fight against terrorism. Japan is determined to continue to play its important role in supporting the activities of the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition in the Indian Ocean.

The disbanding of illegal armed groups contributes to improving the security situation. In Afghanistan, more than 370 illegally armed groups have been disbanded. The implementation of development projects in the districts committed to the disbanding of illegal armed groups is becoming more efficient than ever before. However, given the importance and urgency of those efforts, the pace of progress must be accelerated. The establishment of a unit for the disbanding of illegal armed groups in the Ministry of the Interior in the coming weeks will be a step forward. Japan will continue to do its utmost to support the Government of Afghanistan through policy coordination and by providing necessary assistance in that area.

Counter-narcotics is another priority issue requiring urgent action. Building on ongoing efforts, including full implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy, additional measures have to be explored to cut the link between the insurgents and drug production and trafficking.

In the area of reconstruction and development, concrete steps have been taken to implement the Afghanistan National Development Strategy on the basis of the outcome of the Paris Conference. We welcome the recent decision to make the decision-making process of the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board streamlined and more effective.

However, much remains to be done on both the Afghan and the international sides. The commitment and pledges of the international community must be followed through and implemented promptly. I am pleased that Japan, for its part, has fulfilled almost all of its previous financial commitments, and the additional pledge we made in Paris will also be implemented in a timely manner. I would join in the call of the Secretary-General for pledges to be translated into urgent action.

The elections in 2009 and 2010 are too crucial to fail. Their success is essential to consolidate nation-building efforts and democracy in the country. It is necessary to ensure that the will of the Afghan people will be faithfully reflected. Voter registration has started as a first step in the preparations, with other steps to follow. The Afghan Government and the international community together must make every possible effort to complete the necessary preparations in time so that the elections are organized in a free, fair and secure manner. Japan will lend its full support to the Afghan Government and the United Nations.

Regional cooperation is another essential element in achieving stability and development in the country. We welcome positive steps, such as the planning for the next peace jirga and the Afghan economic cooperation conference, which is now under way. Japan places priority on assistance to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, including follow-up of the G8 initiative.

To reverse the current negative trend and achieve social and economic stability is a major challenge for the international community as a whole. In that endeavour, the coordinating role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is more

important than ever. I applaud the leadership of Mr. Kai Eide in carrying out that challenging task, as well as the dedication of UNAMA staff, who are working under very harsh conditions. Japan supports strengthening the capacity and priority needs of UNAMA so that the Mission can fully accomplish the mandate given to it by the Council.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We extend our gratitude to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Kai Eide, for their sincere efforts. I would also like to thank all their colleagues in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their firm commitment and valuable dedication to the consolidation of peace and stability in Afghanistan. The central role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts in Afghanistan is of paramount importance, and we fully support it.

The latest report (S/2008/617) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan, as well as the reality on the ground, present us with a mixed picture. On the one hand, we have witnessed remarkable accomplishments by the Government and the people of Afghanistan in various fields; on the other, despite all those achievements, many daunting challenges — such as insecurity, poppy cultivation, the production of narcotic drugs, drug trafficking and humanitarian crises, among others — have yet to be effectively tackled and continue to endanger the stability and development of Afghanistan, along with that of the region and beyond.

It is of grave concern that, as indicated in the report before the Council, the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. Increased terrorist attacks and violence in certain parts of Afghanistan caused by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other criminal and terrorist groups, coupled with the pervasive drug trade, have created grave challenges. The increase in civilian casualties, which is a result of terrorism and is also in part caused by the military operations of foreign forces, is yet another concern preoccupying the people of Afghanistan and international public opinion.

The hearts and minds of the Afghan people, who have gone through various forms of hardship and suffering in the past few decades, cannot be won by relying solely on military operations; nor will it be possible by trying to appease the extremists and terrorists, who will not be satisfied with anything less than returning the country to the extremism that it experienced in the past. Rather, as was also mentioned by the Ambassador of Afghanistan, it will be achievable by making ordinary Afghans feel the results of the help and support of the international community in their day-to-day lives through the reconstruction of infrastructure, capacity-building, training, education and the development of important sectors such as the agricultural sector.

The recent increase in insecurity in Afghanistan clearly suggests that the attempts made by certain countries to approach some extremist and terrorist groups have been counterproductive and have only emboldened them. That is a matter of great concern that could create a new version of extremism in the region.

Furthermore, we are of the view that the Afghan National Army and Police should be more seriously strengthened. The transfer to Afghans of full national ownership over the security of their country should be expedited if the insecurity in Afghanistan is to be addressed effectively. An important step in that direction was the hand-over, in August 2008, of leading responsibility for security in Kabul to the national security forces led by the Afghan National Army. That important development should be built upon and followed by more steps.

As indicated in the reports of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, crop yields have actually increased in Afghanistan in 2008. The cultivation, production of and trafficking in narcotic drugs, which adversely affect the security of that country, have continued unabated. Undoubtedly, combating that menace requires a long-term strategy. The magnitude of the threat requires more resolute and coordinated efforts by Afghanistan and the international community. On its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran has spared no effort in combating that threat. I have explained our endeavours in that regard in my previous statements in the Council. While continuing that fight with unwavering determination, we expect the international community to join us and to become more seriously involved in the fight in order to save peoples

across the world from the destructive impacts of that menace.

However, despite all the concerns and uncertainties to which I have referred, one thing is clear — the Government and people of Afghanistan continue to demonstrate their steadfast resolve not to bow to the difficulties they are facing but to surmount them and to work for a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. In that regard, they need the support of every one of us in the international community. The Paris Conference of June 2008, at which the Afghanistan National Development Strategy was launched, provided the world community with another opportunity to reassure Afghans that, as they continue on their journey towards stability, security and development, the international community stands with them, offering its help and support. We concur with the report that the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the Paris Declaration have established a road map for future efforts by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to bring stability and development to Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, along with other neighbouring countries and the world at large, has a vital interest in a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan, and in an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and with its neighbours. Over the past six years, we have spent more than $300 million in helping the Afghans rebuild and reconstruct their country by mainly spending on building infrastructure and capacity-building. As an example, and as mentioned in the report, the Islamic Republic of Iran recently concluded memorandums of understanding with Afghanistan on bilateral trade and has agreed to construct a teacher training centre in Kabul. In addition, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance has signed an agreement with Iran to expand public service training.

My country has also extended its hospitality to over 3 million Afghan nationals over the past three decades. As present, there are about 960,000 Afghan refugees registered in Iran, with another 1 million Afghan nationals living illegally in our country. For all these years, the Afghan nationals have enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, the educational and welfare facilities in Iran and have been and are benefiting from the same subsidies as our own people.

It is our earnest hope that the international community will assist in the process of enabling Afghan nationals to return to their homeland and in helping create the conditions to facilitate their voluntary repatriation in a more timely manner.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): On behalf of the delegation of Pakistan, I would like to say how pleased we are to see China, a great friend, presiding over the Security Council. We wish you every success, Sir. I should also like to congratulate Ambassador Michel Kafando of Burkina Faso on his successful presidency of the Council last month, and to thank Special Representative Kai Eide for his briefing this morning.

We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this important discussion. The objective of durable peace, stability and development in Afghanistan is faced with daunting challenges. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/617) portrays a mixed picture and an overall deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan. Four months after the Paris Conference, that is a cause for concern, and this is a time for reflection.

The challenge in Afghanistan is without doubt difficult and complex. There is no quick fix. It requires the sustained engagement and commitment of the international community in support of Afghanistan. With such support, considerable progress has been made in recent years. That foundation needs to be consolidated. A truly comprehensive strategy is required to address the remaining intricate challenges of reconciliation, security, drugs, governance and development. To ensure effectiveness and success, such a strategy must be built around and pursued with full Afghan ownership. Capacity-building in all fields and at all levels is an essential element of that strategy. In that regard, the report of the Secretary-General points out serious gaps and shortfalls, which must be addressed.

Lack of security remains a major problem and concern. However, the report does not seem to be very clear on the reasons for the insecurity. While it provides some statistics, it is devoid of information on the multiple and complex factors that contribute to insecurity in Afghanistan. Moreover, it provides a myopic view of the cross-border issue, with an isolated reference that is not only unsubstantiated, but on which

the United Nations Mission of Assistance in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has neither the capacity nor expertise for independent verification. We expect due caution to be exercised in that regard in the future.

Security has to be addressed in all its aspects, including the threats posed by the Taliban insurgency, Al-Qaida, lingering warlordism, factional rivalries and criminal and other illegal armed groups, as well as the increasingly strong nexus with the drug trade. It is obvious that these problems are primarily rooted in Afghanistan and have to be addressed accordingly. Attempts to externalize the problems are obviously self-defeating, and we disagree with some of the remarks made by the representative of Afghanistan today. Apart from being incorrect and misleading, those remarks run counter to the constructive engagement between our two countries at the highest political level.

Besides, security cannot be detached from the wider issues of reconciliation, improved governance, development and reconstruction. That myriad of challenges requires a collective effort based on cooperation and shared responsibility by all.

Much more needs to be done on counter-narcotics. Short-term measures need to be complemented by comprehensive, durable and long-term solutions based on alternative livelihoods and development. As the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime recently reported, there is no point in reducing opium cultivation if farmers switch to cannabis. That is happening in some of the provinces that are opium-free, for example in the north. The issue needs to be seriously researched and addressed.

The worsening humanitarian situation, particularly aggravated by rising food prices, has to be addressed on an urgent basis. In the battle for hearts and minds, that freedom from want is as essential as the freedom from fear, which unfortunately is also being negatively impacted by the rising toll of civilian casualties in Afghanistan.

Genuine national reconciliation can significantly boost Afghan and international efforts to bring about peace and stability in the country. Winning the support of the peaceful majority is essential to isolate and break the insurgency. We support the Afghan efforts for reconciliation as part of the comprehensive approach.

The United Nations has a central role in the international efforts in Afghanistan. UNAMA is not merely an outpost, reporting on the situation on the ground. It has a well-defined mandate, and we appreciate the work being undertaken for its fulfilment. It would be useful in that regard if the report were also to shed more light on the efforts and measures the Mission has deployed, in terms of number and sophistication, to carry out its overall coordinating role to facilitate a more robust and delivery-oriented support process.

We agree with the observation of the Secretary-General that in the end success depends on the full implementation of the commitments undertaken by the international community. The recommendation to bring about a political surge also hits the right chord. It underlines the need to look beyond the military option, which, though necessary, is not the sole solution. In our view, that should be complemented by an economic development and reconstruction surge. The promises need to be translated into tangible benefits for the Afghan people, which is the surest way to win their hearts and minds. We believe that an objective ground analysis of the development needs and full use of local resources and capacities must be part of the efforts to improve aid effectiveness for development in Afghanistan.

A peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is in the interests of regional and international peace and security. It is, above all, in Pakistan's vital interest. Apart from our Afghan brothers and sisters, no country or peoples has suffered more than Pakistan from the direct consequences of the decades of conflict and instability in Afghanistan. We have hosted millions of refugees over the years. We have been afflicted with drugs, arms and environmental degradation.

Along with Afghanistan, Pakistan will therefore be the primary beneficiary of peace in Afghanistan. It will enable us to restore calm in our frontier regions, whose traditional peace has been inflamed by war and instability in Afghanistan, especially after 2001, when many Al-Qaida and Taliban elements crossed the border into Pakistan. It will enable the dignified repatriation of the remaining Afghan refugees, an essential step for the security and stability of the region. It will enable our two countries to serve as the hub for interregional trade and an energy corridor, a strategic objective with immense potential for our economic development. Pakistan's commitment and

support for the success of the international efforts in Afghanistan is, therefore, clear and resolute.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are together facing the brunt of the terrorist threat. We are suffering from its deadly impact on a daily basis. As President Zardari said in his address to the General Assembly (see A/63/PV.10), Pakistan is a great victim in the war on terror. We live with it, we are the target of terrorism, but we will never succumb to it.

As a result of our role in the counter-terrorism campaign, the security environment on our side has deteriorated sharply. Thousands of innocent civilians have fallen victim to terrorism in Pakistan. The horrendous attack last Friday on a jirga in Orakzai Agency is the latest of those condemnable acts. Sensitive to the sentiments of our people, the new democratic Government is in process of reaching the national consensus necessary to confront and defeat the terrorists. We are following a new holistic strategy against extremism and terrorism, employing political dialogue and socio-economic measures, but retaining the option to use force whenever required, as demonstrated by our ongoing campaign against terrorists and extremist militias in Bajaur.

Pakistan's contribution in the fight against terrorism is well known. Much of the success against Al-Qaida and the Taliban has been achieved with our support and cooperation. If the number of soldiers deployed and sacrifices made is a measure, Pakistan alone has done more than the combined effort of the international partners in Afghanistan.

In his statement in this Council on 9 July (see S/PV.5930), my Foreign Minister outlined several steps, including matching military measures that can be taken by all sides to promote cooperative efforts based on shared responsibility and full respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity in order to more effectively address the security challenge, including border control.

We are determined to carry out our part. We remain committed to working together with Afghanistan and the international forces towards that objective. Pakistan will continue active cooperation within the Tripartite Commission, which has been recently re-energized.

Naturally, we expect reciprocity in such support and cooperation, based on goodwill and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and on a mutual commitment not to allow our respective territories to be used against each other. No foreign troops will be allowed to operate inside Pakistan. As my President said in the General Assembly, we cannot allow our territory and our sovereignty to be violated. Such actions are not helpful in eliminating the terrorist menace and actually serve to empower the forces against which we fight together.

Our relationship with Afghanistan is rooted in history. It is a multifaceted engagement between our two peoples, who are bound by age-old fraternal, cultural and religious ties. The destinies of our two countries are interlinked. In his statement to the Council, Foreign Minister Qureshi outlined a vision of diversifying and strengthening this relationship. He called for overcoming suspicion and building trust and goodwill, a sentiment also echoed and reciprocated by Afghan Foreign Minister Spantâ.

I am pleased to note that we are firmly on that track. We intend to press forward on all possible avenues of cooperation. The recent meeting in New York between President Zardari and President Karzai and the meeting between the two Foreign Ministers have built upon the positive momentum of the earlier contacts at the highest political levels. The two sides have agreed on a comprehensive and constructive engagement on multiple tracks, including political, military, intelligence and economic cooperation.

Foreign Minister Spantâ is expected to visit Pakistan during this month. Pakistan will be hosting a meeting of a mini-jirga in Islamabad on 27 and 28 October. We expect that people-to-people forum to make a useful contribution towards bringing about peace and stability in Afghanistan. The Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission is expected to meet in Kabul in November. We are arranging to convene the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in Islamabad in January 2009.

We will continue to help the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Of our total commitment of $320 million, $130 million has already been utilized on various socio-economic and infrastructure projects. Despite the shortage of wheat in Pakistan, we are fulfilling our commitment to provide 50,000 tons of wheat at concessional rates to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, as we continue to host millions of Afghan refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the international community need to do more for their early repatriation and their rehabilitation inside Afghanistan.

Let me conclude by saying that, through mutual cooperation and the support of the international community, we can achieve our common objective of peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region. We have to succeed. We owe it to our present and future generations.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. de Klerk (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing the Netherlands to take the floor. We would like to add a few remarks to this debate in view of our commitment to peace, security and development in Afghanistan. We are offering support as a donor, in line with our commitment made during the Paris Conference and in support of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, as well as by providing around 2,000 Dutch soldiers as part of the International Security Assistance Force mandated by the Security Council.

Let me start by expressing our deep appreciation for the tremendous efforts undertaken by the United Nations family in Afghanistan under the able leadership of Ambassador Eide. We are grateful to Ambassador Eide for his clear and sober introduction this morning and for his tireless efforts.

We continue to support the consolidation and expansion of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, notwithstanding the difficult circumstances. A stronger United Nations footprint in Afghanistan will help enhance the unity of purpose of the international community in Afghanistan.

In his recent report (S/2008/617), the Secretary-General refers to the deteriorating security situation in parts of the country. We share his observations and concerns. Indeed, the Taliban is stepping up its attacks on Government representatives and aid workers and has intensified a campaign of violence and intimidation against the local population.

This terror and violence should strengthen our resolve to keep working towards our long-term objectives. There are no easy shortcuts, and we should not trade in our long-term objective of a stable Afghanistan free of terrorism and at peace with the outside world for short-term security gains.

The strongest weapon against the Taliban is not a military one. It is a civilian one: it is a competent Afghan Government which is viewed as legitimate and which enjoys growing credibility among the Afghan population. The administration needs to be embodied by officials of personal integrity who are willing to reach out to all tribes and communities under their jurisdiction. We therefore respectfully encourage the Afghan Government to redouble its efforts in fighting corruption and involvement in illicit activities within its ranks and to appoint officials on the basis of their competence, integrity and ability to reach out to all communities. We hope and trust that the recent appointments by President Karzai will contribute to strengthening this governance.

The elections next year are a vital test which we cannot afford to fail. First and foremost, we have to ensure that the elections are conducted in a safe environment. Here, the international forces have an important role to play, but the Afghan security forces will be at the forefront. Increasingly, those forces are taking responsibility for security in a growing number of zones. By and large the Afghan army is doing a professional job, thereby commanding respect and trust from the population, and we would hope to see similar developments in the Afghan police force. Training efforts to bolster the strength of the Afghan National Police have to be a priority for all those involved.

We are aware that much more progress in the area of security is needed, not only with a view to the upcoming elections, but also to allow the Afghan Government, with our support, to increasingly provide basic services such as health care, education and improved infrastructure for the Afghan people. Those are the features that will help to strengthen the belief and trust of the Afghan population in their Government and that thus will help rebuild and further stabilize the country.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): I would like to align myself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of France on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to join my colleagues in extending my thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Kai Eide, for introducing the

comprehensive report (S/2008/617) and for today's briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. In addition, I would like to thank our Afghan colleague for his comments.

The report provides a very substantial analysis and, most important, conveys a sense of urgency. We fully share the observation that it is imperative for the Afghan people to see and experience, in a more concrete manner, the results of the reconstruction efforts undertaken both by the Afghan Government and by the international community. In our view, acceleration is required in the translation of the Paris commitments into concrete political action. In that vein, I would like to thank Special Representative Kai Eide for his untiring efforts to enhance coordination and to move all actors forward on our joint agenda.

As one of the major international partners in assistance to Afghanistan and a major contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Germany is strongly committed to continue its comprehensive support for the international efforts under the umbrella of the United Nations.

The report of the Secretary-General rightly draws a mixed picture of the current situation in Afghanistan. Despite the substantial challenges still facing us there, we should not forget that only seven years ago Afghanistan was a country where the population did not generally have access to basic health services, where human rights were violated and where women were denied access to education and public office. Against that background, we can clearly acknowledge the positive achievements of the Afghan Government, supported by the international community.

In the words of German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier: "Every strip of land that is cultivated by a farmer again, every child that can attend school again, every new hospital and every kilometre of new road is a small victory for humankind".

In 2009 and 2010, the election process will, in our view, be an important step towards a stable democratic Afghanistan. Germany will assist Afghanistan in preparing for those elections.

The Paris Declaration provides the strategy and the road map for renewed and strengthened efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community in facing remaining challenges. We strongly support the concept of increasing Afghan ownership in all aspects of governance, exemplified in the launch of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, and recall that the Afghanistan Compact will remain the agreed basis of our work.

Increased efforts on the part of the Afghan Government are required to improve governance across the board and in particular to intensify the fight against corruption. We should encourage the Afghan Government to take further decisive action in combating terrorism, corruption and the trafficking and production of drugs and their chemicals precursors; and to continue the reform of the justice sector in order to be able to continue to improve the human rights situation.

We view the recent Government reshuffle as an encouraging sign of the political intention to strengthen the reform agenda. We are ready to intensify our cooperation with the Afghan authorities in order to put into practice the priority identified in Paris: strengthening institutions and economic growth, in particular by focusing on agriculture and energy.

Germany welcomes the leading role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in the coordination of the international civilian effort, and I would like to take this opportunity to underline the need to ensure that UNAMA is adequately resourced to fulfil its extended mandate.

We are prepared to live up to our international responsibilities and we are firmly committed to continuing our support to Afghanistan. In that regard, Germany has recently increased its development aid for Afghanistan by €30 million to a total of approximately €170 million in 2008. The day after tomorrow, the German Parliament will take a ballot on the Federal Government's proposal to prolong Germany's contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) while increasing the personnel ceiling to 4,500 soldiers through an increase of 1,000 servicemen and women. At the same time, Germany is ready to double the number of German police officers in the framework of the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan, in line with the Union's efforts to reinforce the Mission. In light of the imminent food crisis, Germany has made available additional funds at short notice in order to enhance the humanitarian capacity of UNAMA.

Germany shares the concern expressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the issue of civilian casualties. We note with great concern the number of

civilian casualties, due mainly to the increased violent and terrorist activity of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremists and their asymmetric tactics. ISAF has taken efforts to minimize the risk of unintended civilian casualties and has installed procedures for an after-action review. We recognize the need for continued efforts by the international forces to avoid civilian casualties during military operations.

In line with the Secretary-General's report, Germany would like to encourage all regional partners to continue efforts to improve regional cooperation in all fields. Finally, I would like to express sincere gratitude to all men and women helping to improve the situation in Afghanistan. They all deserve our greatest efforts.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Wetland (Norway): Norway is fully committed to the rebuilding of Afghanistan. At the Paris Conference in June, Norway pledged €500 million for the period covered by the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. That makes Afghanistan the number one recipient of Norwegian development and humanitarian assistance.

As friends of Afghanistan, we are concerned by all the negative reporting on developments in the country. We must not inflict fatigue on our people on the ground or on our soldiers and aid-workers by speaking the language of defeat and decline. Let us instead focus on the improvements and important nuances in the security situation. Not all of Afghanistan is equally troubled. Three quarters of security incidents this year have occurred in a part of the country where only 6 per cent of the population lives.

I would like to raise three issues today.

First, let me mention elections. The United Nations and, in particular, the United Nations Development Programme, are doing an important job in assisting the Afghan authorities to prepare for elections. Our main priority now must be to assist voter registration, to provide information about the election and to make it safe to vote — in particular, to make it safe for women to vote. The elections, which we hope will demonstrate that the Taliban is losing ground, must take place according to plan.

Secondly, we — the donors who pledged our support in Paris — must honour our pledges. We should all be held accountable at regular intervals and we must let ourselves be coordinated, as we agreed in Paris. At the same time, the Afghan Government, which pledged to fight corruption and narcotics, must also be held accountable. The recent appointment of Mr. Atmar as Minister of the Interior is encouraging and promising in that respect.

Thirdly, we must not lose time by slowing down the efforts of Special Representative Kai Eide to build a lean and professional United Nations organization in Afghanistan. Mr. Eide was welcomed as a United Nations representative who brought hope to our efforts in Afghanistan, so we should not — to borrow a phrase from the financial crisis — push our bad loans onto him and wish him good luck. We have a serious obligation to support him every day.

If our joint endeavours in Afghanistan are to succeed, it is crucial that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) have the necessary resources and sufficient qualified personnel to do the job. That is the only way that UNAMA can fulfil its strengthened mandate and meet our expectations, which are high. We urge Member States and the Secretariat to support UNAMA and Kai Eide in their efforts to rebuild Afghanistan and to fight bureaucracy when it stands in the way.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Mr. Eide to respond to the comments made and questions raised.

Mr. Eide: The Ambassador of Costa Rica had a couple of questions that I am pleased to answer. To comment, in a more detailed way, on changes in the Government of a sovereign country is, perhaps, a bit daring. I must say, however, that I do know the gentlemen who have been appointed to their new positions. I am convinced that the dedication is there, the knowledge is there and the proven experience is there. That is why I also believe that those changes have been welcomed across the board. That is why I also say that this is an opportunity. The topics that we are dealing with are really critical to our overall efforts. That is why I also compliment the President on having chosen to change ministers in those particular ministries and having brought new dynamism into the Government.

Then there is the difficult question of coordination. Can I say a few words about that? First there is the question of resources: the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was and is a small and, as I said, a vulnerable mission. It is a mission that was shaped at a period when one did not need the kind of specific qualifications and experience that we need today, and so to shift the profile is difficult.

Secondly, we are in a building where, over the years and decades, rules and regulations have been put in place that are probably of great value in regulating activities, but sometimes perhaps slow things down a little bit. I cannot blame the Secretariat because the Secretariat acts upon the instructions given by Member States.

Let me cite one example. We were given a mandate by the Security Council in March; we were given additional input by the Paris Conference on 12 June. In order to fulfil that mandate, we have to formulate a budget that can provide the resources required. The budget will then be debated throughout the year and adopted some time in December, and then the recruitment process can really start. That means that, by May or June 2009, I will have the resources in place that I need in order to implement the mandate given to us in March 2008. Some members are impatient. I can assure them that I am more impatient than they are because every day I feel the pressure of the lack of proportion between mandate and resources. With all due respect, the Council votes in favour of generous mandates and rather quickly, but does it vote for generous resources just as quickly? That is where the problem lies and that is where the people on the ground feel the pressure.

There is a third element. I will be brief. There is a long way, as we know, from generous statements of commitment to changing policies and coordinating action and to visible results on the ground. The Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan said that there is no quick fix. He is absolutely right, but nevertheless I feel that sometimes some countries, here and elsewhere, which should know that there are no quick fixes tend to believe that for our part there is a quick fix. We all know it is not like that. Let us work steadfastly and stubbornly together and then we will see results.

That is my answer to the question of coordination. I am glad to have had this opportunity to respond. I can only say that putting the coordinating mechanisms in place, as I announced I would do in April, took quite some months to have approved, not least before countries here and elsewhere added details and comments. Finally, what I suggested a few months earlier was approved. So things take time and there are no quick fixes, but we will do our best.

As to the question of poverty versus economic growth, the Ambassador of Afghanistan will be in a much better position to answer that question, but I think some basic elements can be mentioned here. First, the increase in food and fuel prices impacts the poverty level of the population. With regard to the growth level that we are seeing, there are two or three elements that influence whether it will be 6 or 11 or 13 per cent. That will depend on the relatively small agriculture sector and the influx of foreign money. That clarifies a little bit the phenomenon that was questioned.

I am pleased to see agreement on two or three issues here. First, we must do away with the doom and gloom that are too widely spread, almost as a hobby, by some. We should put an end to that — not as part of a smart strategic communication plan, but because there are substantive reasons for having greater confidence in what we are doing. I mentioned the changes; let us believe that they will result in changes also on the ground. I am pleased about that.

I am pleased about the support that was promised by everybody around the table to the new team that the President has put in place. I think that is tremendously important. As I said, I am pleased about the support that Council members give to us and I count on all of them to see that support materialize on the ground. The Ambassador of the United Kingdom mentioned the eight points that I had drawn up as elements that I want to address quickly, and he supported me strongly and will follow and monitor that. All of those eight points require the full support of some key donors, so we will work together to see that they are actually carried out.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Eide for his clarifications.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.